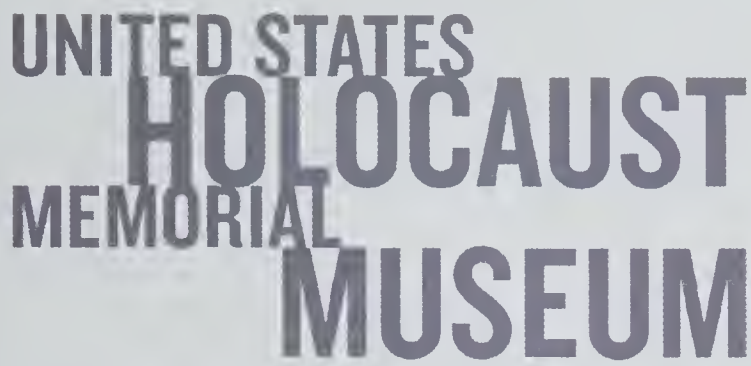

ועידת התביעות
Claims Conference
Conference on Jewish Material Claims
Against Germany

Claims Conference Holocaust Survivor Memoir Collection

Access to the print and/or digital copies of memoirs in this collection is made possible by USHMM on behalf of, and with the support of, the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Library respects the copyright and intellectual property rights associated with the materials in its collection. The Library holds the rights and permissions to put this material online. If you hold an active copyright to this work and would like to have your materials removed from the web please contact the USHMM Library by phone at 202-479-9717, or by email at digital_library@ushmm.org.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2019 with funding from
Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, Inc.

https://archive.org/details/throughconcretew01brow

Through the Concrete Wall:

A child survivor comes out of hiding

Eva Metzger Brown, Ph.D.

Copyright: Eva Metzger Brown, PhD

DS
134.42
B768
A3
2000

Table of Contents

The immigration trail

I. Introduction: Trauma revisited

II. A history of silence and determined denial

III. Breakthrough #1: I find my name, "Child Survivor"

IV. Breakthrough #2: I claim my very early memories

V. Breakthrough #3: I uncover profound feelings around my losses

VI. Breakthrough #4: I reconnect with my Holocaust family tree

VII. Breakthrough #5: I break through the concrete wall

VIII. Beyond the concrete wall and onward toward a broader sphere

IX. Musings on the whereabouts of God and other things

X. Epilogue: Looking through the kaleidoscope of my life

References

Appendix A

Acknowledgements

Immigration Trail (1938 - 1941) .

Birthdate: 07\13\38 - Nurnberg\Furth, Germany

07\15\38 - Separated from my mother; she is ill

11\09\38 - Kristallnacht

11\16\38 - Emigrate to Paris; visa good until 11\39

? \39 - Separated from my father; he is rounded up and confined in Falaise, a detention camp

? \39 - Leave Paris for the coast with my mother

10\ \39 - Move to Pont de Ce, a suburb of Angers, move again, move again
Live with Helene Vernhes, move to Rue Fulton

11\ \39 - Visa extended for one more year

05\10\40 - Germany invades France

06\17\40 - Injured in the bombing in Angers; brought to Hopital d'Angers for treatment of shrapnel wounds; separated from my mother.

06\17\40 - Placed in a Catholic orphanage

10\12\40 - Released from orphanage
Reunited with my mother who survived her wounds, but left leg amputated.

10\12\40 - Reunited with my father in Toulouse with the help of the International Red Cross

11\ \40 - Leave for Pyrenees, headed for Portugal

? \41 - Change direction to port of Marseille

4\22\41 - Receipt of exit visa...finally

5\10\41 - Leave Marseille on the freighter, "Mont Viso"

6\26\41 - Freighter held over in Casablanca

7\24\41 - Re-embark on Portuguese liner, "Guine"

? \41 - Detained unexpectedly in Martinique. No exit visa. Visa obtained with help of Stephen Wise of American Jewish Congress

8\06\41 - Arrive in the United States - 3 years old!

Chapter I. Introduction: Trauma revisited

It is a wonder that I lived through the war. I could have died in the bombing of Angers but I did not -

"Just wounded," they said.

I could have been abandoned in the Catholic orphanage, where I had been placed, but I was not. My mother came for me one day, recovered from her wounds and amputation -

"Hers," they said.

I could have been lost in occupied France, but I was not. The Red Cross found my mother and me and helped us cross the border into Southern France, where my father was waiting in Toulouse -

"His," they said.

We could have been denied the obligatory "affidavit in lieu of a passport" needed to depart France but it was approved -

"Leave," they said.

Recalled to Casablanca, we got off the boat where some took ill and died, but not us -

"Reboard," they said.

On our unexpected layover in Martinique, we could have been refused the desperately needed exit visa for the United States, but we were not -

"Allotted" they said.

And when we finally came to America, we prayed they'd take us in and they did.

I entered the United States on the affidavit signed in France on April 22, 1941, by a Mr. Myles Standish. Stationed in Marseille, he was the Vice Counsel of the United States. His signature saved my life and set me free from the turmoil in Europe and the chaos in France. His "stamp of approval" allowed me entry into a new country with a passport free of an exit date. Previous transit visas required limited stays of six months to one year. Interestingly, carrying the name of one of the earliest settlers in the United States, a "Mr. Myles Standish" helped transform my status from a fugitive to a survivor, from the hunted to the safe. His signature allowed me to get passage on one of the last freighters headed for America. Owned by the Portugese, it was a neutral ship allowed to pass through the Straits of Gibraltar without delay.

In Europe my life was like that children's game: "Red-light - green light": Stop and go!

Stop and go!

Stop and go!

I went from one country to another, one city to another, one place to another, and when I landed in the United States it was the same. One room in an apartment was replaced by another and then one apartment was exchanged for another until we moved to Queens, N.Y.

and stayed put there for some years.

I was not concerned with this story of migration for a very long time. These details of the "facts" in Europe seemed distant from my everyday life in America. Instead I was concerned about how to make sense of the world in which I found myself though I might not have phrased it like that, then. First, I was worried over whether I would wake up each morning. This concern started at three years old and continued well into adulthood. For a very long, the many mornings of waking up did not convince me that I would wake up again the next day. Secondly, I was puzzled over the noise around me - French, German, English - and figuring out who spoke what and why and what each word in each language meant.

I am told that when I was three years old I stopped talking. I think now that I must have given up trying to make sense of the "crazy" world situation into which I had been born and for which no one could give me an explanation. Maybe there was no explanation, but I did not know that then. When I stopped talking, I did make an impact on the world in a way that I could not do by talking. My world was my parents, and when I became mute my parents called the doctor. He advised them: "Pick one language; she'll be able to learn one language at a time" as if learning languages was the root of my difficulty. I was immediately taken out of my French-speaking nursery school and put in one where only English was spoken. My parents followed the doctor's prescription at home too and started speaking only English to me, that is except for those times when

they did not want me to understand what they were saying. Then they spoke German. That is how I came to understand German. Eventually, I did learn English very well, but it did not work. I mean the plan the doctor suggested to my parents to have me talk again did not work the way he had planned. The way I see it now is that when I stopped talking, I stopped talking, even when I spoke again. Oh, I said the words thereafter, but I stopped saying what I really meant and what I really felt and what I really knew frightened me.

Perhaps I stopped "truly" talking before I even learned in which language I was supposed to be speaking. Perhaps I stopped talking in France where I was wounded and separated from my mother at not yet two years old. Perhaps I stopped talking in the orphanage where the nuns with the large hats took care of me. I was there for four months without family or a familiar face to gaze upon. Or perhaps it started earlier than that. Perhaps the groundwork for language ran aground as early as the time of my birth when my mother took ill and left me. A roster of baby nurses then began to take care of me, one replacing another, as each successfully immigrated from Germany. There was no stability around me; no one person upon whom I could depend. Everyone was in a panic. Many were trying to flee. People were feeling unsafe. My father, known as a "currency Jew" in Germany, did have a passport, but my mother was not granted one. Attempts to get her and me that precious piece of paper were unsuccessful. Without papers, we could not leave Germany. That was the climate into which I was born: life and death on the line and the tensions that surrounded such

uncertainties.

Following Kristallnacht on November 9, 1938, my mother was finally given travelling papers for France and I was on them. We were "allowed" to stay in France for one year. It took us more than two and a half years "to get out" and frequent renewals of those papers to get the "right" papers to depart from France and Europe, too. Looking back I can say I survived the war, yet something inside of me shifted. The way I see it now is that talking and saying words is not a sufficient sign that everything is okay, inside. Being able to talk does not necessarily mean that you are alive and well. Not that my parents could have known this. I did not know it myself, then. But now I would say that while many saved my life, my physical life, something inside of me withdrew, went into hiding if you will. It is clear to me now that what endured was a lingering hope to reconnect with others who might help me understand myself and help me gain some meaning of the times into which I had been born. Years later and with much time and personal effort, the consciousness of the impact of what was truly my Holocaust story would reach down into the subterranean levels of me and the multi-varied and multitudinous layers of feelings that surrounded the facts and details of my stops on the "immigration trail."

At thirteen, I decided I wanted to study to become a clinical psychologist. I thought I needed to understand "my mother," to understand my world better. I would learn that it was I whom I

would need to try and understand within the context of my few very early memories and my reconstructed history. I would come to realize that self-understanding around my puzzlement and confusion of what had happened to me required that I talk again, truly talk...talk clearly. I would have to stop hiding myself and my story. I would have to come out from behind "the concrete wall." I would have to break through it, so I thought.

As I see it now, there were two things to wonder at in my life: 1) that my heart did not stop beating; I did physically survive the war, and 2) that my hope did not stop being; I kept searching. I kept searching for my story: for the words to my story and the words for my feelings, and for a person(s) with whom I would feel "safe enough" to share these things as I slowly "remembered" more clearly what had happened to me.

This book records what I found. Every time I tell my story, it feels new. In this book, you will find multiple versions of the same experience; each telling is different. Each account reveals an unexpected nuance, here and there. I have learned that my story is made up of many stories, of layers of stories: stories behind stories and stories behind those stories and feelings behind those stories. This compilation of stories and feelings is written in the form of essays and prose poems and bits of memoir. The pieces are not presented in the chronological order in which they were written. Time itself does not order complex and complicated experiences. Rather, writings are clustered under a progression of

chapters marking "Breakthroughs." Even these chapters cannot be viewed as entirely sequential nor separate from one another. Many events were proceeding at the same time or close in time as things were being written. On one hand, I was personally committed to work through the trauma of my early years through a lengthy and intensive psychotherapy; on the other hand, I was professionally involved in "studying the impact of the Holocaust on individuals and generations. I led workshops at ongoing survivor reunions and professional meetings and I spoke on a variety of topics: trauma from one generation to the next, silences and secrets, traumatic memory, the retrieval of memory, the value of intergenerational exchange and the healing process. While all this was going on, I made trips to Europe, visiting places where members of my family had lived and died: in Germany, in Czechoslovakia, in Israel and in the United States and I met with archivists and researchers who spoke with me and interviewed me. All these "activities" wended their way through the different levels of my psyche and here and there led to the writing of a poem or an essay. These pieces gave words to the "inner" spaces within myself where only "blanks" and unasked questions had existed and sparked memories and images that had been unknown to be before. I was on a journey which I can see now was geared to increase my consciousness and storehouse of recollections. I was recreating, reconstructing and healing myself from early emotional and physical traumas and early and multiple separations from significant caretakers. Thus these chapters must be seen as reflecting a series of simultaneous efforts that enriched each other along the way. The effect was the breaking

through of what I now understand to be "early childhood memory (Reviere, 1996)," true images, perceptions, sensations and feelings around my experiences during the war and not others' words of what happened and did not happen to me. In fact, there were no words from my parents, nor others, of the impact of the war on me, a very young child. People did not focus on the needs or pains of war in children, at that time. Silence ruled and was accepted by the young, me included, as the way things were. I did not inquire and I did not tell. It is no surprise to me now, that one day I would try to understand things better.

In 1967, I received my PhD in clinical psychology from Columbia University, a goal of mine since I turned thirteen. In 1970, I received additional training at the Austen Riggs Center in Stockbridge, MA, at a time when Otto A. Will (a protege of Harry Stack Sullivan), Erik Erikson and Margaret Brenman Gibson taught there. I became certified as a Diplomate in Clinical Psychology by the American Board of Professional Psychology in 1982. In 1979, I received training as a mediator. In 1981, I formed Divorce Mediation Consultants with now-Judge Michael A. Ponsor. We were the first clinical-legal team in the State of Massachusetts and hoped to help parents find a less destructive way to reconstruct their lives around the often-times cataclysmic issues surrounding divorce. I was on my way to becoming a trauma specialist in the areas of personal loss and life cycle upheavals. In 1989, I founded the Center for Restructuring Family Relationships. The deep exploration that I was to enter concerning my own survival and my

identity as a Holocaust survivor was still in front of me.

I first spoke publicly about being a Holocaust survivor in 1989. It took me that long. Encouraged by a friend, I gave the sermon on Rosh ha-Shanah to the Jewish Community of Amherst, Massachusetts and weaved the issue of the survival Isaac to my own. This Jewish community was warm and welcoming to me when I first joined and over time gave me the feeling that it would be a safe place to share my past. I spoke again, on September 28, 1991 - Tishrei 20, 5752, when I celebrated my bat mitzvah at the age of fifty-three, fifty years after having arrived in America. I wrote much of it myself and through it told my story more fully for the first time. In 1992 and to my surprise, I was invited to speak at a survivor meeting. It would be my first survivor meeting and I mark it as the first time that I was truly able to "be" with Holocaust survivors and feel that part of me that is a Holocaust survivor, too - a "Child Survivor." From this point on, insights emerged. The concrete wall was shifting. I began to write poetry again. I began to say in words what had laid dormant inside of me for so many years. I began to organize the inner chaos reflective of my early years and find the "right" language to do so in.

This book is written to use the words I have found and share the poetry I have found myself compelled to write. Poetry is a medium through which there is more to understand and feel than just the words on the printed page. Through the ways words follow each other and the spacing between the words, poems offer the reader a

chance to resonate to another's rhythm and soul, to another's wordlessness. All the years I read and loved poetry, this is what poetry communicated to me. As a child, I owned only two books, worn thin by constant rereading. As a young adult, I "jotted" down ideas, special thoughts, kept a journal and recorded observations of my children. I stored these writings "in the cabinet" for safe-keeping. They are still there "safe" and kept from view, waiting to be revisited. I think of them now as practice for the time when my own Holocaust story would come out of a drawer, find words and be written and rewritten, time and time again.

Writing for me has always been a step toward speaking, and speaking with the "right" persons helped me to hear an echo within myself that let me appreciate more fully than I had before that very young child survivors of the Holocaust have their own story of Holocaust trauma. We know now, that it is a story far different from the story of their survivor parents. With these growing insights my hidden story broke through. I started "talking" again, truly talking. I started talking with my husband, my doctor, my friends, my colleagues, my children, my grandchildren and Elie Wiesel. It is so hard to explain and feel that another will understand that shift from feeling that what one has to say is not quite legitimate to feeling that what one has to say is important and real. For me, sharing a story of pain, no matter how young I was, needed validation. If you think of those things that you keep to yourself, those things that whisper to you in the night and you ignore, those questions that you wonder about but do not express,

this is the voice that tells the story to which I am referring. For me, with each question, statement, story and retelling of the story, breakthroughs became possible in reclaiming my memory and acknowledging for myself the horrendous nature of my early life experiences. In this sense, this book is written for me.

In addition, this book is written in memory of the one and a half million children who died in the Holocaust at a young age under dreadful, inhumane and sadistic conditions. It is a book of mourning; it is a book of rebirth; it is a book testifying to the fact that not all of us were murdered.

This book is written for the very young child survivor. Trauma seals the lips of many from telling the full story; for the very young survivor limited language skills at the time of trauma obstructs the formation of a story they and others can recognize. Yet, the perceptions, images and feelings of this traumatic time buried in the brain of the very young survivor are now understood as fragments of true memory (Neisser, 1982; Reviere, 1996; Schacter, 1996.) In some cases, words can be found and stories can be "constructed" around "implicit memory traces" as one brings oneself to return to towns on one's "immigration trail" and cemeteries where dead family members lie. The very young child survivor does have a Holocaust story; it is just more difficult to uncover. Concern for parents' feelings, if parents did survive the war, adds to the reticence to speak out loud. No one wants to cause parents more pain and yet, is there not a new pain created in an

untold story that needs telling, too?

This book is written for those who were older during the Holocaust and have more memories, but still find words missing for parts of their story where they wish they had them. Murder and abrupt loss of loved ones is "life and memory numbing." Torturous experiences of one's own are likewise. Gaps in memory result. Perhaps some of the things I did to find my story may be helpful to those who wish to try and find ways to get in touch with more of the emotional parts of their story, too, understanding that not everybody wishes to do so.

This book is written for the children of survivors who have a Holocaust story too, often minimized by the shadow of the "enormity" of their survivor-parent experience. Yet, where survivor parents lost their mother, the second generation lost their grandmother and where the survivor parents lost their homes, the second generation lost a sense of their roots, and where survivors lost material objects, such as photo albums, the second generation lost the family stories that went with each picture. In addition, it often goes unrecognized that living with a survivor is to be deeply and directly impacted on by the Holocaust.

This book is written in the hope that "trauma revisited" through the lens of Holocaust trauma will resonate for other readers, those who were traumatized by other trauma as very young children. The trauma associated with the loss of one's parents at

an early age or that connected with parental divorce, poverty, sexual abuse, race and violence often exist as a part of people's lives without a recognition that these are traumatic events (Salaman, 1970). These events often appear to have been "forgotten." For many there is a benefit if these "memories" are retrieved and explored, too.

And lastly, this book is written with the hope that professionals will gain the further understanding that working with the traumatized, in this case those traumatized by the Holocaust, is to work with persons whose level of anxiety, depth of need to mourn, strength and determination can only be underestimated. Much more is now known about the impact of trauma on the human psyche than was known 25 years ago, but much is still not fully understood; our patients can teach us as we support them.

Just to admit to oneself that one has experienced serious trauma can take a very long time. It did me. To see the term "Holocaust Survivor" after my name made me think others were being referred to - not me. Others were worse off, not someone who went to school, listened to her mother and went to bed in one place at night. I did not remember the "bad" parts of my story for almost 50 years, and if I had, I think that I would have been told or decided or figured that it was not so bad because it was not now. It was over. Now I think it is never over. That is who you are. Once a Holocaust survivor, always a Holocaust survivor, even when you move on to other things. Being a Holocaust survivor is part of your

identity, part of your history and part of your mission in this world.

Sometimes, I have been asked what is Holocaust and what is not Holocaust, what is related to the Holocaust and what is "just" life itself. With hindsight, I would say, my Holocaust experience infused everything in my life even though I do not think it determined everything. Perhaps I feel this way because I was so young. I had no life before the war, no chance for the development of a stable base. This is a life circumstance quite different from that of the adult survivor. My early development was shaped by the requirements of the "immigration trail," by the early separations from my parents, by my physical wounds and by other innate factors. During this time I barely had the use of a language with which to cope with these events. I was three years old when I left Europe. In my opinion, decisions in my life - what I chose to study, whom I chose to marry, how many children I chose and was fortunate to have - were influenced by my being a child survivor of the Holocaust. My Holocaust experience did not determine that I got educated, but as I see it, that I entered the field of psychology was related to my need to try and make sense out of the chaos of my early life and find a way to categorize the downright inhumane and cruel behavior of others that had changed my life. The decision to marry my husband was not determined only because I was a Holocaust survivor, but with hindsight I know it contributed to my intuitive sense that I should marry someone kind, with a stable family base and extended family tree. At the time we married, neither he nor I focused on

the fact that I was a survivor. It had no words in our relationship. As for the three children we had, and were able to have, he wanted more, I wanted more than one. I was often told that I would have been one of four children "if we were still in Europe."

The issues surrounding loss and death are especially powerful in a Holocaust family. And yet in my family, the expression of feelings around these losses was muted, numbed. Our lives seemed to move quickly beyond death. That is how my parents dealt with death, or rather could not and did not deal with Holocaust losses and later losses in their lives. Not all survivors react in this way. Reactions to loss in different survivor families vary. The losses vary. For child survivors, not all wish for the same things as I did, nor have their decisions influenced in the exact ways as I think mine were. To be a survivor is not to be like all other survivors; we vary among ourselves. And yet, I think being a survivor is like wearing a pair of tinted glasses; everything gets colored... intensified.

No matter what stories one tells and what stories one does not or cannot tell, one never forgets. For survivors and their following generations, it seems to me that the issue is not that they and their children and their children's children will forget, even though many fear this. In my opinion, the issue is how to heal the emotional wounds of the broken Holocaust family tree so that one can pass on both the joy and the pain of one's history without

being retraumatized or feeling one is traumatizing others in one's family.

In the chapters of this book an effort is made to recount the emergence of my story and the story of my breaking a life-long silence. Mine was a personal silence of more than 50 years and a family's effort to deny how devastating the impact of genocide was on everybody's life (Chapter II). Chapters III-VII mark my experience of the breakthroughs in the many layers of silence that surrounded me. Chapters VIII and IX detail how I experienced moving beyond the limitations of the concrete wall and onward toward a broader sphere. The final chapter, the epilogue, tells how I understand these breakthroughs. It presents a picture of how I perceive things got altered as new information came in and moved old assumptions aside. Like the turning of a kaleidoscope creates new patterns, the discovery of an opening in the concrete wall makes new visions possible.

As you read this book, I hope that you will find more words for yourself, more stories behind the stories you already tell and an increased desire to share feelings about the impact of the Holocaust on you, whether you lived through the war or were exposed to it horrors afterwards. I hope you will talk with generations below you and generations above you and with persons outside of your family. For those situations, those plights, that resonate in you, I hope they will help you feel less isolated than you may have felt and less willing to remain silent than you have been all these

years; for those situations that ring less true for you, I hope you will reject them. Some examples will always ring more true than others; some may not ring true at all.

In my experience and after so many years of silence, the question seems to me to be not how can those who did not live through the Holocaust understand me, but rather how can I make myself understood to myself. How can I create a framework for the impact of the destructive forces of chaos on my life and thereby transform evil energy into creative and constructive possibilities? "Talking" is still constant work; reminding myself to "feel" and not minimize my reality requires constant attention; accepting that it was real means saying, "Yes," to the authentic in my life. It would be easy to fall back into the silence that denial helps create, but....

I Asked Him

Before I met with Elie Wiesel
I planned what I would say
When I met him all I did was cry
I knew I would
I had been wanting to meet him for such a long, long time
It was a relief just to be there.

When I stopped
I asked him my two questions.

I asked him how he had broken his silence - so soon
He paused..."10 years"
I had not considered 10 years long for a Holocaust silence
Then I realized
All Holocaust silence feels long to the silent.

I asked him how he had dealt with the exhaustion of breaking his silence over and over again
He raised his shoulders as if to say, "What can you do?"
I had not considered exhaustion part of breaking silences
Then I realized
Only a survivor can break a survivor's Holocaust silence exhausting as it is.

Those were my two questions about breaking silence

Then I stopped speaking.

He said: Do it

Write it down

As if recording one's "Holocaust story" is the most important thing that a person can do

He pushed me.

It no longer mattered that I had been silent for more than 50 years

It no longer mattered that breaking my silence exhausted me

It no longer mattered that I was in mourning for dead children

It no longer meant that their never-ending silence need silence me too.

I can speak

I can break a silence

I can break my own silence

I can break the silence of my Holocaust.

I write bits and pieces

essays

poems

scraps from memory....

He smiled

He called it my "kaleidoscopic" autobiography

He asked to read it.

This man whose stories made words count for me for so many years
Wanted to read the words of my broken-silence
I laughed and laughed
And laughed.

When I went home
I began connecting these bits and pieces of my story
    the essays
    the poems
    the scraps from memory....

Elie Wiesel was right
It needed doing
It needed doing, NOW
If for no one...but myself.

This book is about my story.

This book is about my silence.

November, 1996

Chapter II. A History of Silence and Determined Denial

For a while
I asked myself why I was silent for so long
even after I learned to speak the English language well,
even after I became a psychologist,
even after my father died,
even after my mother wrote her memoirs.

I asked myself how I missed the notice in the New York Times of the first major Reunion of Holocaust Survivors in New York City.

I asked myself how it took me one year to attend my first Greater Boston Child Survivor Group meeting after I knew the group existed.

I asked myself why I so minimized the early separations, why I so discounted the image I remembered from the bombing of Angers, and why I so down-played the scar on my body. I referred to the bombing for most of my years as an "accident," as if it had been only an accident as one has in the street when one is not careful. Clearly, I was not ready to explore Holocaust issues, then.

Silence seemed more comfortable to everyone in the beginning. My unexamined silence was the norm. In my family, we were considered not to have "suffered that much" and I took that to mean "do not complain," "do not make an issue of it" and "do not ask questions." In the small society of survivor families in which I

grew up, no one talked about what had happened either. The conversations focused on daily events and activities focused on creating daily routines disrupted by the war. In our small community, I knew of only one other child who survived the war and we never talked about the war together. Nobody ever talked with us about the war, either, neither in school, nor on the radio, nor in the movies. Not like it is now.

I was to reflect years later that I also did not talk about other things, the things that made me feel different from American children. Other children went to the movies on Saturday afternoon; my parents did not know that children did this together and I did not inform them. I was silent too about the English lessons I was forced to take at eight years old to remove the guttural "rrrrr" of my German beginnings. Perhaps my parents thought the absence of the "rrrrr" would make me more American, more accepted, less different. I do not really know. I did not ask them. I did not know that they thought I had an accent. Years later I would miss the loss of mine. But at eight years old, I only knew that I was afraid of being with this stranger who was paid to "fix me up". That made me feel different, but whom could I tell.

I was silent, too, because I was an only child, the oldest grandchild and the only grandchild to be born in Europe.
My next oldest cousin on my mother's side lived in Israel, a sabra. Only years later would I realize that we had things in common: disrupted families, common losses and hidden wishes that things had

been different and we had been together.

Looking back, I can remember direct reactions of others toward me that made me more resistant to talking about the Holocaust than I was already. Being light eyed and blonde, I was asked repeatedly, "Are you Jewish?" as if I could not possibly be; I was asked "why we had left Germany so late" as if we had done something wrong; and being so young for a survivor I was told, "You were too young to have been affected." What could I say? And later, when people asked if I had been in a concentration camp and learned I had not, I felt their interest in me and my story wane. People did not react to me as the person who I was, they reacted to me as someone who did not fit their stereotypes of persons who had truly suffered. These reactions toward me hurt me and made me feel alone with my experiences and unaccepted. With time, I found answers to these remarks. I came to realize:

- that Jews come in different shapes and colors,
- that all Jews might have left Europe "sooner" if they had known,
- that the younger the survivor, the more development was arrested, and
- that the trauma of a non-concentration camp survivor was very different from a concentration camp survivor, but traumatic too.

I kept these insights to myself. Yet, this silence hid a feeling of being misunderstood by others, which kept me distant from them. Despite my distress, I continued to struggle to make sense of my

experience as if I sensed that one day I might try and explain it. I learned more things. I learned that being a Jew is not something one measures on the outside but one feels on the inside; I learned that appearance is a false barometer of a person; I learned that being able to identify crises of life and death was something you had to figure out through life experiences so as to be able to leave objects, property and roots behind - next time; I learned that there was no such thing as being "too young" or "too old" in terms of how much one suffered: suffering was suffering; there was no scale to measure less or more; and I learned that I had lost my childhood, absence of a concentration camp experience not withstanding. I did not argue with others about these things nor express how I had come to understand them. For years, I chose silence.

That is what I had learned to do in my family: be silent around difficult topics and feelings. My parents were already living under Hitler's rule when I was born in 1938. Hitler had become Chancellor in Germany in 1933. The Nurnberg Laws had been put into effect in 1935. My mother's brothers and sister had all been fortunate to have emigrated already - some to Israel, some to America. Those in America would help us come there years later. The family was dispersing. My maternal grandparents remained in Nurnberg, if briefly; my paternal grandmother remained there until taken to Theresienstadt. The rest of my father's family was on the run. Unfortunately within my father's family there was a rift between him and his two much older sisters, which intensified

during the immigration. Although all came and settled in America, I had no contact with any of my aunts or their families and did not attempt to make inquiries into this "lost" part of my family during my father's lifetime. I was restrained by my mother's wish that I not ask questions of my father; I felt inhibited by my perception that my father might be pained by the topic of his family. I regret not finding out from him directly whether this was what he really felt.

During my growing up years, my father was a silent man. He did not talk about what he felt, although I felt I "knew" that he felt guilt around and responsibility for what we all had been subjected to: terror, injury, and separation. I "knew" he felt rage at having his life interrupted, his successful livelihood stolen and his connections ripped from him. And I "knew" he felt sorrow and grief that he was unable to bring his mother out from Europe. She died in Theresienstadt. The result of this was that he spoke about his mother not at all so that I had not one story of my grandmother Karoline. I did have a few photographs of her though. As for his father Max, he died when my father was three years old; my father did not remember him; there were no photographs of him in my home. There was one piece of a story and that was that he had been a very, very kind man. My father told me that he wished to emulate his father in this way. That is all I knew. Children make up stories to fill in the gaps in their family history. Maybe that is why I think I "knew" what my father felt. A made-up story is better than none. My father died in 1984, before I was ready to ask him

questions and fill in the spaces of his life story with his own words. I feel sad about this.

As for my mother, she tried to cover up what she was feeling during my growing up years as best she could. Neither of my parents ever addressed that my mother had lost her left leg in the bombing of Angers nor that she was only twenty-four years old when this happened. No one addressed the impact on me of growing up with a mother who had lost her leg in the war, a mother who could not simply get up in the morning to brush her teeth, or run, or go to bed at night without first taking off her prosthesis. I did not talk about these things, but they pained me deeply every day. It seemed too distressing for my mother to address such things directly and therefore it seemed it would be too hard for me to address these things within myself. We were a family of broken hearts for which there was no energy for mending, nor time for understanding. Silence was the not-so-temporary balm; denial was the almost permanently closed door. Life was directed forward. Even the truly good things, were not celebrated:

(1) that my mother had saved her life by true grit, refusing to die and give up and thereby helped save mine, and

(2) that my father with enormous effort had re-established our lives financially, after some years, which ensured the education and life plan I sought to follow.

Silence and denial blanketed together the authentic feelings of joy and profound pain around these intense life experiences. We moved on, holding all these things inside.

That is what I learned to do in my family: hide my true feelings, be silent about things I knew were there and not examine things - out loud that puzzled me. Many things I did no longer feel at all; they were outside of my awareness. My mother, my father and I practiced silence and determined denial. It became a family legacy, from one to another, reinforced. The way I understand it today is that I tiptoed around the feelings of my parents because, on one level, I worried that crossing the boundary of their self-imposed silence would upset them or hurt them or re-injure them. I did not ask questions about that part of their Holocaust story that was missing. Today I feel that by "taking care" of their feelings, I was tiptoeing around my own. I did not ask myself questions about my own Holocaust past. I avoided what I might feel by expressing myself, openly, and I avoided dealing with what I imagined would be my parents' upset if I spoke my mind. And I avoided the upset I imagined I would feel if my parents got upset. Things did not feel "safe," and so I did not test the waters to see how unsafe they really were.

For a long time I never watched a Holocaust documentary. I never read a book on Holocaust history. I never wrote a Holocaust poem. Years later, when I did read two books: Anne Frank: The diary of a young girl and Night by Elie Wiesel, I was very pained and moved by both. I did not speak about these books in depth with anyone.

In 1956, in the first week of my freshman year of college, a student said to me, "You cannot be Jewish; you do not look Jewish." She was very direct and very forthright and very shocked. For some reason, I was direct too, this once, and told her I was Jewish. I told her "the facts and figures" of my immigration. Then she was really shocked. This was the first time I had spoken of these things to an age-mate. It felt important, but I did not continue to share my Holocaust past with others.

In 1958 my father offered me a trip to Europe. I accepted his offer. I was 20 years old. Neither of my parents had returned to Europe - yet. I went on a "Grande Tour" with a group of young people, so many countries in so many weeks. I visited Nurnberg on my own. I stayed at the "Grande Hotel," there. Accommodations had been arranged by a business connection of my father. I was treated royally. There were a dozen red roses in the room, a basket of fruit, a newspaper and a note that said I should ring if I wanted something pressed or needed shoes polished. It was a very different re-entry into Nurnberg than had been my exit in 1938, but 1938 was not on my mind. Being in Nurnberg and speaking German did not make me feel uncomfortable. I was "unconscious" about the things that would concern me thirty years later. I do not remember having any specific goals in going to Nurnberg at this time except to "see" where I had come from. Matters relating to the impact of the Holocaust on my own life were still very much underground. I visited what I think was the house where my mother was raised and the garden where the family used to gather. I did not think of

visiting a cemetery nor of going to an archive. I was to do that only years later.

In my mind I visualized Europe in black and white, like the black and white photographs in the one album, in the one suitcase, that came over with us. These photographs acted as my source of memory. I never thought that Europe would be anything other than "black and white." When I arrived in Europe I was stunned to find that it was in color like the United States. There was yellow sunshine and blue sky and green-leaved trees. Of everything I saw and every place I visited and everything I wrote in my journal, this made the biggest impression on me. It is hard to describe how significant this seemingly small thing was for me. Seeing Europe in color was a shock to me over and over again and then it made me very happy. I can remember smiling to myself. It is as if Europe in color made it less depressing, less somber and less frozen in time. And then I realized that the wind blew, the rain fell, the morning came. It is "little" things like these that can have a profound significance for a person. "My discoveries" meant a lot to me, but I wondered if they would seem childish to others and so I did not talk about them for a very long time. Now I know that it is details such as these that are anything but childish or insignificant.

There are many things none of us know when we are children. I did not know for the longest time that one could talk about such an observation - Europe transformed into technicolor - as just a correction one had made in one's idea about the world. Such a

discovery did not have to be judged as good or bad, nor as something that needed to be minimized nor denied because it might make someone else feel bad or might mean you were not grateful or might mean you were making a big thing out of something little. It never occurred to me to make a "big" deal of something like this, not because it was not special to me, but because someone else might not understand. Being misunderstood made me feel bad.

In 1960, I graduated from college and proceeded on to graduate school at Columbia University in New York City. For the next twenty-four years I cannot recall specifically thinking about my Holocaust history or its impact on me. As far as I was concerned, I did not have any memories of my life in Europe and I viewed my life in America as fine, even happy. I now think of these years as silent years. I was busy with other things, some of the tasks of a young adult's life: I got married, raised children, studied and received my PhD, began to work in my professional field and settled into suburban-rural life. One red flag of what was being kept inside me was an abortive experience with psycho-analysis in the early 70's.

In 1979, I read my next Holocaust book, Helen Epstein's, Children of the Holocaust. It echoed to my experience as a child of survivors, but it did not help me break my silence.

I began to change my perspective on my early life experiences by a confluence of events. In 1982 my father asked me in

desperation to please help him for he was losing his mind. This is a very difficult thing to be asked by your father. It was for me. I had not yet become fully aware that my father had begun the downward spiral of Alzheimer's disease. I was devastated by his request; I was devastated by his rapid deterioration. There was nothing I knew to do but watch the losses my father had to endure. I had been the child who had made him happy. Now I was transformed into a powerless bystander who could think of nothing to help him slow his illness and make him smile again. "Powerless" echoed to what "helpless" had meant years before when I was two and was separated from him then. I had "lost" him before in France; I was to lose him now again in life and then again when he died. The effect of his illness on me catapulted me into a schedule of psychotherapy.

I began scanning the memories of my inner life. Words for my Holocaust experiences of loss would come very slowly. It was difficult for me and frightening to me to trust another human being with those "inside stories" of profound sensitivity and pain, grief and guilt, shame and rage, vulnerability and loneliness that denial had kept buried within for years. For me, I had to find someone with whom I could find the words to describe a life-long "secret" that had been minimized in its importance. The secret had to do with my "internal story," the story of my silence around my own injuries in the war: physical, emotional and psychological and injuries sustained otherwise by life itself. The secret was that denial did not cure. It could not erase what had happened. It could

not protect me from it happening again. In fact, denial did just the opposite. It kept my fears of what had happened in the unconscious and made me relive them without being able to identify their roots. Sometimes I could not even allow myself to be anxious a little, over little things, for fear of being flooded by too much feeling. If denial broke down, I used avoidance. I avoided things, people or events that made me feel uncomfortable. Denial and avoidance together became then not only defenses, but ingredients for a spiral to nowhere but internal overload and loneliness.

Some need an ally to break silence and the pattern of determined denial and planned avoidance. I did. But more than that I needed to get to the point where my energy to move forward could get reconnected to the hope that it would be worthwhile. With time, I gained a strength and a desire to "get it out." By then I had reached my fifties, an age when more than a few child survivors and survivors of other traumas begin to wonder aloud about their beginnings.

I had been talking to a few friends about my new-found interest and efforts to put my story together. One of them said, "You should give the sermon next year on Rosh ha-Shanah at the synagogue." Our synagogue in Amherst is small and at that time had no religious leader; members gave sermons. In 1989 at Rosh ha-Shanah, I shared some of my story with my community. I intertwined it with the story of the Akeda.

"If there is <u>one thing</u> we can learn from the story of Abraham,

it is the story of faith;

"if there is one thing we can learn from the story of Isaac, it is the survivor's freedom of choice: good or evil;

"if there is one thing we can learn from Hitler, it is the value of one's roots."

The response of the community was warm and kind and overwhelming to me. Its intensity frightened me. I left the synagogue to be alone. I was not yet able to talk with others, face-to-face, and meet their questions about my deeply felt Holocaust history. The personal contact they offered made me feel too vulnerable.

At the celebration of my bat-mitzvah, in 1991, I spoke on the Intermediate Sabbath of Sukkot. I was fifty-three. By now the community had a rabbi. It was enormously helpful for me to speak with her. She did not question - was I or was I not Jewish. She did not judge me on the adequacy or inadequacy of my past Jewish education. I had had little. Being a survivor had given me certain credentials but not the formal ones. Perhaps that was one of the reasons for my sensitivity to the question, "Are you Jewish?" Perhaps for me it had less to do with my appearance than with my losses. When others were going to Sunday school, my family was trying to recuperate from the war. Recovering from the war was the main focus in my home even though nobody spoke about it. I did not attend Sunday School for any length of time and I did not learn the basic foundation of knowledge of Jewish history and Jewish ritual. Now, Rabbi Sheila Weinberg and I met regularly to talk about what I had missed and to discuss texts and to examine themes of my bat

mitzvah Torah and Haftorah portions. I wrote much of the service so that it reflected both what I had studied and what I had begun to construct of my Holocaust history. With hindsight, studying for my bat mitzvah represented my first effort to change something in my life that had been lost to me because of the timing of the Holocaust in my life. I had lost a foundation of Jewish education; it had been relinquished for other things. Now I began to take some action and build up what had been neglected earlier. I went from being silent and feeling passive, wounded and unempowered to becoming articulate and feeling active, alive and inspired. I no longer had to feel ashamed about what I had missed in Sunday School; I was filling in the gap. Sukkot was an ideal time for me to speak. It was a time of the ingathering of the harvest; it was a time of the ingathering of the peoples of the world - historically the ingathering of the exiles to Jerusalem - and it was a time of the gathering-in of a Holocaust survivor. As it is said in Ecclesiastes, "A season is set for everything, a time for every experience under heaven...." No timetable is given; only the knowledge that there is a time.

In 1992, I was invited to be a panel speaker at the Nurnberg\ Furth Reunion. This was the first survivor reunion that I would attend. I had hesitated to attend earlier ones. I knew it would upset my mother that I wanted to go and also speak. I would be speaking on the Holocaust and I would be trying to break my silence. By now my mother had written a memoir, Our Lives (filed with the Leo Baeck Institute), on her life with my father that

included the war years. While I did not yet claim my own story, I knew that our stories would be different. As I began my explorations, she opposed my efforts. I think she was frightened about what I would find, about what she would hear. I heard myself say to her in a kind but firm way, "Exploring and finding my own way to talk about the Holocaust and break through my years of silence is something I must do for myself." "This is about me and not you, about me and not my father." "This is something that needs doing and I must do it." "I do not need to share it with you if it is too painful but I do need to do it for myself." Child survivors who review their childhood will find areas in which they feel they were underprotected. Children of survivors and children in general can feel this way too. For the child survivor, it is a fact of war that they could not be protected from separation, isolation and fear. My mother could not protect me. One way for her and for other parents to deal with this fact of war is to avoid thinking about it. It is painful for parents to hear that it is not possible to protect their children. They feel self-critical and criticized. I believe it was hard for my mother to see my determination. I know it is hard for her to hear some things I did learn, but to her credit, over time, she has chosen not to disregard what I am doing and learning. She is coming to terms with my explorations and new-found discoveries as some old family patterns are challenged and others broken.

Now I was on the path to identifying what I needed to do for myself about the silence of the Holocaust in my life; I was

prioritizing this need for myself over the needs of either of my parents for silence and denial. This is not easy to do, especially when your parents have suffered and you have suffered and no one can speak about the suffering. Yet, I had to try and start to do so; I had to speak out; I had to speak up; I had to begin to follow through on my own questions - the ones I had kept inside, the ones that were now surfacing. It did not feel bad; it felt essential. I did not feel bad; I felt revitalized.

At my first Nurnberg\Furth Reunion, I chose to speak on "The Impact of the Holocaust on Our Children and Our Children's Children." I was the first speaker on the second generation panel which presented after the survivor panel. I represented the link between these two generations. I had a foot in the ordeals of the survivor and a foot in the experience of what had been transmitted to the child of survivors. I found I could empathize with both generations.

The Scar

There are lines of scarred cross-stitches above my ribs
Documentation of a Holocaust past.

I touch each stitch turned white with time
No one seems to notice that I was wounded too
Of course, I do not bring it up.

I do not show myself my scar
I do not show myself to others.

My scar is disconcerting
It makes me different
It makes me less than whole.

Was something taken out
Was something put back in?

I do not ask
I do not think about it
And when I do
I stop the thoughts from coming.

I cannot reconcile that I survived a war
While other children died from unattended scars
I cannot reconcile that I was left.

No one seemed to notice murder
Then...
Or if they did
They did not tell a child.

No one seems to notice murder
Now...
Or if they do
They put it out of mind.

One day
When I grow up
I will show everyone my scar
I will tell everyone that Holocausts are never far from home
That scars are for reminding
And I have mine.

February 9, 1995

Chapter III. Breakthrough #1: I have a name, "Child Survivor"

The very first Nurnberg\Furth (N\F) Survivor Reunion took place in 1978. It was organized by Mr. Frank Harris, a child survivor from Nurnberg, Germany. Single-handedly, Frank organized each subsequent meeting - every four to six years. The purpose of these reunions was to bring together survivors and their children and their children's children from the area of N\F, Germany. These reunions were not held in Germany; they were held at hotels in the Catskill mountains in New York State.

I began to hear of these meetings in the late 1980's, but I felt unsure about attending. I was apprehensive, concerned about what might get raised for me. I had no specific idea of what these things might be. An invitation from Mr. Harris to be the lead-in speaker on a second generation panel at the reunion in 1992 swayed me to bite the bullet and attend. Once I decided to go, I was filled with anticipation - in a positive sort of way. I was curious about what I would feel and whether I would know anyone. I did not expect to. I said to myself, "You were too young; how could you know anyone; how could anyone remember you." These worries proved to be unfounded. I knew two people who introduced me to two more and then each to two more again. One evening I found myself seated next to someone who had worked with my father; one lunch time I sat next to someone who knew my mother, grandmother, aunt and uncles. And so it went - much more easily than I had feared.

When I got up to speak, quite a few persons had identified who I was and to whom I was related. That is how I have found it is at reunions. People either know someone in your family or someone from your home town or country of origin or something of the experiences through which you lived. Most of whom I met decided that I must have been one of the youngest who survived from N\F or at least the youngest that they knew.

****

The following is adapted from the talk I gave at the '92, N\F reunion and is entitled, "The Impact of the Holocaust on Our Children and Our Children's Children:"

Meeting together at "reunions of survivors" provides an opportunity for us to share our stories and heal our hearts from the impact of the Holocaust on our lives.

Personal stories live in all of us. There are the stories of our lives in pre-war Europe, the stories of our immigration and the stories of our perceptions of how our lives were interrupted and disrupted. And then, there are the stories behind the stories we actually tell and the stories behind these stories too. Underneath them all are the stories of the feelings we carry, stories more complex than the stories of only the facts and figures of events. The stories of feelings have to do with our personal pain and our individual losses, our sense of alienation and perceived difference

and our feelings of conflict around being born Jewish and being persecuted for it. Some stories we share easily; others we share with difficulty; and then there are those stories we share not at all. All these stories are important, but I would suggest that the stories behind the stories, the stories of true and real feelings are the most important to unearth. Through storytelling we bequeath our legacy to our children, but equally important, storytelling is a way for us to heal our hearts. It is possible in many instances, though not in all, that when we face the difficult within ourselves and share it with those whom we love and those who love us, we will begin to heal. In this way, our children will heal too from the impact of such a worldwide cancer as was the Holocaust.

Our children are heirs to a Jewish history of persecution that transformed them into children of Holocaust survivors. Within them, they carry the inheritance of family trees, with missing branches and prematurely foreshortened lives. Family trees where all the birthplaces of their parents are in different countries and, often, on different continents than their own. And when our children look at these family trees, they will ask us "Why?" They will ask us to tell them the story of where we were born, what it was like and how we came to come to America. They will ask for our stories and with children's eyes and with children's hearts they will listen to the words of our story and the words that are missing. They will intuit the feelings behind these stories whether these feelings are shared explicitly or not. There is no forgetting, even if we might like to do so. To try to forget would only be to bury monstrous wounds in

darkness and prevent them from healing in the light of day. Sharing a difficult time in our lives need not re-injure us nor scar others. Scars are not created by stories of our lives; scars are created by life itself. Telling the story is a way to begin to heal those scars within ourselves and protect our children from the feeling of responsibility that they have either created our pain or that they, themselves, are responsible for removing this pain from our lives. I ask you to ask yourselves: "Can we and should we unearth our memories, our stories of this difficult time and is it worth the effort?" "Can such an effort reduce the colossal impact of the Holocaust on ourselves and our children and can it begin the process of our much-needed healing?" The answers for myself are, "Yes, yes."

That the immigration forced by the Holocaust will have an impact on our children in some way, for me, goes without saying. It has. It will continue to do so. Alone, an immigration by choice impacts upon the generations to come. But the impact of a forced immigration, one based on a political movement calling for genocide and directed towards a people whose biggest crime was that they were members of a religious group, has got to raise tensions around issues of personal identity, fears around personal security and personal possession, and tensions between those feelings of hope and hopelessness, mastery and helplessness, and faith and crises in belief, in oneself and in the world-at-large. Calling for the genocide of a religious group is calling for the sacrifice of a people. Human sacrifice, as we know so well from the Torah, is

verboten. The lesson is taught to Abraham and repeated every Rosh Hashanah in the story of the Akeda. One does not take human life, not even in the name of God.

My parents did not talk to me about the Holocaust. There were spaces of silences and lines from the past which I knew not to cross. Today I make an effort to cross a line with an early memory.

I remember being in summer camp in New York and watching children run, one to another, passing a stick between them. As the stick got passed to the next person, that person would run to the next person, who would then run further with it and pass it on to yet another teammate. I did not have a word for this game. I did not speak the language. I did not know how to ask anyone what the other children were doing. I looked on. I was an outsider and a bystander with all those feelings connected with being on the outside. But playing the game looked like fun. One day I was going to join in and I was going to love it. And I was going to be good at it. The game was called "relay races." I learned a lot of English in camp but I was never going to forget what it felt like to be different, to be on the outside and to feel alone.

I was different in many ways from those other children. Before I had gone to camp, I had lived through Kristallnacht, and an immigration that took me from Nurnberg to Paris, to Angers, to Toulouse, to St. Beat, to Marseille, to Casablanca, to Martinique and finally landed me with my parents in New York City on August 6,

1941. I was three years old. I was a Holocaust survivor. At four years old I went to summer camp.

I was different because I had lived through a bombing that wounded me on the right side of my body, left pieces of shrapnel inside my brain, and separated me from my mother at the age of not-yet-two in war-torn France. The bombshells that struck created permanent scars left to remind me that life is fragile, that life is a gift and that life and health can be taken away as it was taken away from others who died that day in front of me.

But most of all I felt different because I felt responsible for my parents' pain and I wanted to help make their lives whole again. People sometimes said to me, "Oh, you came over when you were three." As if that was that; it was over. But it was not over for me, a survivor, and a child of Holocaust survivors. First, my parents had to get out of Europe and second they had get to a safe land. However getting to a safe land did not mean that parents who went through the Holocaust felt safe. Parents had to recover physically and emotionally. Such recovery takes years for most parents, and for some, lost health is never regained.

Looking back, I think I tried with the few skills little children have available to lift both my parents' spirits, not uncommon among young survivors or children of survivors. But such an effort was possible only if I focused on reducing their pain, thereby denying my own trauma and my own losses. The losses of a

forced immigration are countless. For me, they included: the loss of a home where my parents felt safe and thus the loss of a home where I could feel secure, the absence of sisters and brothers and the repeated loss of a native tongue. Even in one language, the words of a Holocaust experience are often inaccessible, but with bits and pieces of three, how does one begin to organize chaos?

English was my third spoken language; French was my first and German was my second. In what language was I to tell my story, if I could tell my story? And who would there be to listen? Upon my arrival in America, there was too much trauma to talk about trauma; the tasks of the survivor was to rediscover normal daily routines not to tell the story.

It took me 15 years to find the words to tell the "facts," not even the feelings, of my family's Holocaust story. I was a freshman in college. For many, my story would remain just a fascinating, if horrific, series of events. But "she," my college roommate, was shaken as she listened with disbelief and with those honest eyes that only young people have. Then she told me about herself. As different as our stories were, for me, it was their telling that was significant. I had spoken the "forbidden" and no one had felt the worse for it. In fact, it was the storytelling that created connections.

I know that in many ways the impact of the Holocaust has been different for my children. But in one way it has remained the same.

My parents had difficulty telling me their story, and I have had difficulty telling my children my own story, the story of how the Holocaust impacted on me emotionally. I have found it easier to tell them the stories of others' survival rather than my own. I had been raised with a double message: "not to forget" and not to dwell on the past. The climate is different now. Young survivors and the stories they have to tell are newly significant. "Out of the mouths of babes..." and as witnesses of war come children, now grown, with stories to tell. I hear my own internal voice, its passionate timbre thundering against the years of stony silence. I have a story to tell; I have learned a new language to tell it in, a language of feelings, a language of feelings that come from the heart; I feel compelled to find more words in that new language and share with others what I have "seen."

Storytelling may not be everyone's way to recover from the Holocaust. But for me, "silence" and the secrets that silence keeps is no longer synonymous with strength. Sharing the memories, the images and the feelings around my Holocaust experience does not make me feel more vulnerable; letting go of them makes me feel more accepting of myself and more open to the hidden stories in others. I believe that the effect on my children and my grandchildren of hearing my story will be that they will feel more comfortable around me and experience less pain for me. I believe that telling my story repeatedly and over time will reduce the silence between us concerning the emotional impact of the Holocaust on all our lives. And I hope that slowly we will begin to be able to share

more and more of our most difficult stories with one another...their hearing mine and me hearing theirs.

Each surviving generation of children have their own Holocaust stories to tell. I believe that the letting go of Holocaust silences will reshape the emotional impact of this time on generations of lives. I believe we, who were young survivors, must open up the gates of silence and share what we have seen. We were there when other gates shut down on a "world of caring." No child should be there again. Perhaps the power of our stories uttered with the true feelings of those times, followed by the personal stories of the generations that follow us, will help to heal our families and help to create the needed bridges with other peoples that were so missing then.

Storytelling...this is the legacy I would like to pass on to my children. Storytelling...this is the legacy, growing out of the impact of the Holocaust on me that I would like to pass on.

****

After the other panelists had spoken and the question and answer period had taken place, a young woman made her way to me. She said, "You are a `Child Survivor'." I looked at her young face, at the face of someone from the second generation, who in that moment had given my identity a name. It was a name that I knew was mine. "Child Survivor." I had never heard the term before but I had always known that my experience of the Holocaust was different from

the experience of my parents. "Child Survivor" that is who I was. "Child Survivor" that was my Holocaust name.

The Child Survivor

I told him casually
Thoughts I'd thought about repeatedly
Alone before
"Child survivors and adult survivors are different.

"In the war, adult survivors lost many things
They lost position, power, wealth, respect
They lost visiting the familiar places
Synagogues, butcher shops, cemeteries, gardens.

"Child survivors could not lose such things
They could not lose the things they never built their life upon.

"They lost other things
Things that come from stable living:
    knowing where your parents are each night
    siblings that follow you each year
    children who come out to play each day.

I told him
Offhandedly
"When I came to this country all I wanted was a friend...
I went out into the street looking for a friend.

He burst out crying

Startling me

What had I said...oh yes, it had to do with friendship

I felt it now.

October, 1992

In May, 1993, I attended my first Child Survivor meeting in Boston after a year of debating with myself whether or not to attend. I drove from Amherst to Boston with another child survivor, Ervin Staub. Ervin comes from Hungary. Also born in 1938, Ervin is a colleague of mine at the University of Massachusetts. But more importantly, he said we should go together and he would drive. That was a big help to me because I always fear getting lost when I go to new places and I generally do.

Attending a child survivor meeting is different from attending a meeting of all survivors. For one thing and at this time, child survivors seem to be in the minority at general survivor meetings. Secondly, many adult survivors have long histories and often good memories to share of their life before the war. These memories can help them to cope with the bad times that followed. Reflecting back on pre-war memories can be soothing. Child survivors, certainly young child survivors can hold on to little or nothing good; many were not born prior to war's start. Thirdly, the adult survivor had solidified many of the developmental tasks necessary for personal growth; for child survivors, the growth of their developmental fiber was interrupted by war and the terror associated with persecution became a part of their sinews. In this way, their development and capacity for mastery over some everyday-growing-up tasks was often "arrested." Many adult survivors as well as others have difficulty recognizing and validating the losses for the child survivor. They downplay the impact of the Holocaust on children's lives because they were "so young." That was my experience until I

attended my first child survivor meeting.

When we arrived at the Child Survivor Meeting in Boston, Ervin introduced me. I was met with joyful laughter, "Another Eva! You are Eva #5." The smiles, warm welcome and many "Eva's" gave me a sense of immediate belonging. No one asked me, "Are you Jewish?" No one said I looked too young. No one questioned why as a German Jew my family had not left sooner. And when one member asked, "What are you doing here; you have no accent," everyone seemed to say, "She is here for the same reason you are." I had never thought that not having an accent would be a liability. In fact, I sometimes wished I still had one.

Otherwise, the format of introductions at this meeting was somewhat of a shock to me. There was a go-around the room to introduce ourselves by sharing "brief vignettes" of our Holocaust story. There is no such thing as a brief vignette for a Holocaust story. These "introductions" took my breath away. The horror of what each of us had experienced was heightened by the speed by which each story's few sentences was told. When the meeting was over and I returned home, I began writing, "No Memories At All."

No Memories at All

I listened to the others talk about their childhood
Well, not exactly
I listened to the others talk about what they had lost in their childhood
When they went back in time.

She talked about the cousins who were no longer there after the War and how her family did not laugh again
He talked about how he saw his father walk away from him and into the woods
Thereafter someone said, "I saw him run and fall; he did not make it"
He talked about his mother, who did not come back from Theresienstadt
With no record of her death he hoped she was somewhere though he did not know where
Now at 55, he guessed he was an orphan and had been so for a very long time.

They talked, one after another, about hiding
In closets, convents and cubby holes
Not like you and I do in a game of "Hide 'n Seek"
But for hours and days and years.

One woman came out of a convent, where she was placed when she was 6...
Now she was 10
I thought of her coming out from the darkness and into the sunshine
All she said was,"Then I was adopted"
She did not even say that she had lost her parents.

Each one seemed to ignore the detail of grief
Or maybe they kept it silently to themselves... something of the past to hold to
Or maybe like in a game of "Leapfrog," they jumped over it... so as to get on with their lives
I did not ask
There was no time.

No, it was not that
The first time I heard their stories
I did not ask because I could not find the words.

As for me?
I had no stories to tell of what I had lost in the war
In the war, I was somewhere between the earth and the sky
Somewhere in my mother's arms and then, given to another and another, again.

I lived through Kristallnacht

But I had no words

I cannot remember

I lived through the race across Europe one step in front of the Nazis

But I had no words

I do not remember

I lived through a bomb explosion in France, but I had no words

I do not remember

Thereafter, I lived in an orphanage for four months so they tell me

But without words

How do you remember?

One day my mother came and got me

One day my father came and found us

One day we all fled on a boat...

One day we were returned to Casablanca

One day we sailed...again

Stopped in Martinique

We finally left for America...

One day we landed there

On August 6, 1941

But I had no words

I do not remember.

Maybe, it was a dream

Maybe, it was someone else's bad dream

Maybe, I was listening to others' stories because I do not remember what happened to myself

Maybe, I was listening to others' memories because I wonder what really happened to me

Maybe, I was listening to others with disbelief that something like this can happen.

We were children

All of us

WE WERE CHILDREN!

How could this happen

How could this happen to children

How could this happen to parents

How could this happen to the world

How could no one stop what was happening in the world?

It is happening again

Happening to other children!

I did not know what to do, then

I sometimes wonder what to do, now, now that I am grown

But, as I listen to others' stories
Children's stories
Something inside of me is growing

Pain, "Yes"
Sadness, "Yes"
Grief, "Yes"
Outrage, "Yes!"

I may not have had words, then
I may not have my own memories, now
But there is an echo to the past.

I do believe...
What happened is more than a bad dream
I do believe...
What happened is real.

I hear an echo...
I am listening to the echo...
I want to tell you the words of my echo
I want to tell you the words of my story
I want to hear the words of your story, too.

For I believe...
My story...your story...all our stories
Will move the world so that another generation of children will no

longer have to tell such stories

Of loss, murder, starvation and suffering again.

I have no memories at all

But listen...

I hear an echo

Listen...

Listen...

Can you hear it too?

May, 1993

With hindsight, I realize that in speaking at the N\F Reunion I was advocating telling our stories to one another and to the next generations. I did not immediately realize that I had none of my own stories to tell of my experiences in Europe that I could remember. The writing of "No Memories At All" clarified that for me - or - maybe it simply laid the groundwork for making me conscious of the need to find my own stories, my own memories and my own deeply and secretly held feelings...now that I had found my name.

Chapter IV. Breakthrough #2: I claim my early memories

At the same time that I learned my name was "Child Survivor" at the N\F Reunion, I was put in touch with the Child Development Research Project in New York. This project focuses on trying to understand the impact of Holocaust trauma on the different stages of development in children. I was interviewed on October 18, and December 17, 1992.

The following are excerpts (adapted) from the first interview. In the text, "INT" stands for interviewer; "EMB" are my initials. Material focuses on the early "images" that I kept inside and discounted as real memories.

INT: ...We are interested to know what happened to you, either from what you have been told about your early childhood or whatever memories you might have about growing up, where you were born in your family, and so forth. So you can tell us wherever you would like to start. You were born in Germany?

EMB: Yes. I'll guess we'll have to separate what I've been told and what I remember.

INT: Yes, that's fine.

EMB: What I was told was that I was born at a time when (German) Jewish people were not having children anymore. Even though my family came from Nurnberg, they could not find a hospital that

would accept my mother as a patient (when she was ready to give birth to me.) So my mother was brought to a hospital in Furth. It was the only hospital where Jewish women were admitted. So that's what I've been told....

... (after Kristallnacht) we went from Germany... we went to Paris to Angers.

In Angers, my mother was walking with a friend back from the town hall where they were hoping to get travel visas. This is where the bombing accident took place.

INT: You wrote about this that you were injured or something...what were you told or what happened at that time and how old were you?

EMB: I must have been two years and five months. (Actually, I was one year, eleven months.) I was told that there was a raid and bombs fell. My mother was hit and I was hit and the woman was hit and her son was not. There was tremendous commotion....

What I think happened is that I was hit and I was bleeding from my head onto my face; that's all I can think of. I see pictures of myself at that time in the (photo)album and I have no hair and my mother used to tell me that I had lice and they would shave my head to get rid of the lice. Only as an adult did she tell me that they had to pick out the shrapnel from my head.... I have an image of blood running down my face.

INT: Is that the earliest memory?

EMB: Is that a memory, that image...?

INT: Your past memory of the bombing is some sort of maybe preconscious memory....

Well after the bombing situation, what actually happened? How

did your mother handle this situation about you?

EMB: Well, my mother tells me that she was in the hospital and I was put in a Catholic orphanage. It's very hard for me to talk about my mother's amputation (I sob).

INT: Oh, I didn't realize. What happened to her?

EMB: She lost her leg.... (I cry).

INT: Well, don't talk about it if you can't. It must have been very hard for you....

EMB: (I think I remember once when I visited her in the hospital) she screamed...at them. (She told me) she told them that she had a child and they had to find me and then I came to visit. It's almost like you (I) can hear her screaming because she has a lot of feeling in her.

INT: So you lost your mother as you knew her.... and you were put in an orphanage?

EMB: Yeah.

INT: And when you saw your mother, she had lost her leg so you really lost a whole lot at that time. You probably lost contact with her, you lost.... You don't know much about the orphanage, or... you got separated at that bombing thing?

EMB: Yes.

INT: I see. And so they found you. You have no idea of the time frame?

EMB: No. Well she was still in the hospital when she was operated

on.

INT: You remember seeing her there?

EMB: It's only an image that she's sitting there (screaming). But I don't know if that's a memory....

INT: We can assume the time before you were three, you were separated from your father quite early and then this terrible trauma happened. It was bad enough that you were wounded, but that apparently, you were separated and put into a different environment. You must have been there for at least a few weeks.... (I was there for four months.) So the whole loss of your mother and her leg must be wrapped up together somewhere. That must have been quite horrible.

EMB: As an adult, I learned that I had shrapnel in my head....

INT: ... you had wounds in your head; you must have had some kind of surgery or treatment.

EMB: Well, I had stitches. (I point to my right side of my body.)

INT: Stitches on your side that you can see. It's hard for a child.... Nobody talked to you about your wounds...?

EMB: Those were all very desperate times.

INT: Do you remember your father coming back?

EMB: (I did not.) The first memory that I can say (I have of him) is when I was on the boat.

INT: Going to?

EMB: America.

INT: Would you tell us about it?

EMB: My mother told me that my father contracted malaria in Casablanca and stayed downstairs (on the boat) and I stayed with him. I think I remember my father rocking in his sleep, but that is vague.... Now I wonder sometimes if I just felt the boat rocking...

INT: Probably a memory, yes. It is in many ways accurate. Do you remember the feeling you had?

EMB: Yeah.... (I remember the rhythm of the motion.)

INT:....My impression is that you have your own memories and (memories of) the impact of what happened to you. The more you own, the more comfortable what happened will be for you. Just in general, my impression is that you do have your own understanding of that experience....

From the interview and over some time, I came to realize: 1) that images and sensations of kinesthetic movements could be considered implicit memories and 2) that these memories of mine were real, based on real-life events, and really important. I also began thinking about the impact on me of the loss of my mother's leg and how it represented the loss of her for me; she was different when I saw her again. In addition, the loss of her leg gained additional meanings for me. I had always felt a vicarious pain for my mother that she came out of the war permanently and seriously injured. Suddenly, the loss of her leg seemed symbolic to me of all my losses and injuries too. I think the interviewer

suggested this to me. It must have been lost in that part of the transcript that was marked as "unclear."

The morning following this interview, I sat down and wrote "Blood Drops." In a way, it wrote itself; it just came "pouring" out of me.

Blood Drops

Blood drops down my forehead
Drip unto my lashes and from there down into my eyes
With each blood drop another segment of my soul departs
There are no tears
I do not know to cry.

I try to catch the flood of drops
With fingers cupped against my eyes
To no avail.
I shut my eyes to catch my soul
Too late, it's fled and no one comprehends.

October 19, 1992

Was I remembering what had happened to me? Was I putting words to what I had been told about what had happened to me in Angers? I do not know. What I do know is that I was putting into words what I was feeling and seeing at the time of the writing.

From "No Memories At All": "I may not have had words then
I may not have my own memories, now

But there is an echo to the past."

That past was acquiring a language.

For some, as images (memories) are shared and viewed as real, more images return. They did for me.

Recently, I found myself recalling in more detail and greater complexity the image of my mother sitting up and "screaming" at the time of her injury.

"In Angers, I remember visiting my mother in the hospital. She was sitting up in bed, in a night shirt, her legs covered, one leg, the only leg she had left. I do not remember the nun who brought me to her; I do not remember that I crossed myself as I must have learned to do in the orphanage or as I must have wanted to do with the other children there. I do not know. My mother told me she told the nun repeatedly...almost screaming: "Elle est juive! Elle est juive!" (She is Jewish! She is Jewish!) - meaning I should not be asked to cross myself. I can understand her panic. For all she knew, I was all she had left. But maybe I do not remember it right. Sometimes, I do not know if I remember my mother screaming from her bed in her nightclothes or if I remember my mother screaming in the middle of Rue Fulton, the street where the bombs fell. I cannot quite fix the place, but I remember her screaming. At the same moment that she screams, I feel myself become afraid. The memory of her scream still makes me want to recoil. It frightens me."

As for the sensation of comfort I absorbed from the rocking of the boat, it seemed to generalize for me to the comfort I feel from the rhythm of the rain as it falls and lands and makes a sound in landing. I wonder if I am responding to the rhythmic sound that a rocking boat makes as it goes up and down in the water with waves lapping up its sides. Rhythmic sounds and movements can be soothing to a child. They are to me; they echo in my ears, in my poetry.

I can remember when it rained in summer camp. On "rain days" we would be "freed" from the usual schedule of activities. We would stay in the bunk and play games, and read, and I would listen to the rhythm of the rain as it fell upon the rooftop. Now when I am at home during a rainfall, I still love to just sit and listen to the drips drop.

****

As the doors open to having one's images and memories declared real and valid, one can begin to associate to them from present day experiences in a way that makes sense of the past and gives possible meaning to the now.

I do not remember getting separated from my father. I do not remember getting separated from my mother. But for years later I was always afraid of getting lost. This fear did not keep me from doing things. However, if I were going to a new place, I would feel

that anticipatory fear, the fear one feels when one begins to realize one is lost. I always did get lost. Not badly. Just enough to drive around in circles for a while. For years, it never occurred to me to stop and ask anyone for help, for directions to where I wanted to go. I now connect this fear of getting lost with the times in Europe (and in America too) when I was separated from someone or "lost" by someone - abandoned. That is my understanding. Someone had lost me every time I was in a new place or in a new place without my father or my mother. When lost I would drive in circles and did not ask anyone for help. I thought this was connected to my early life situation where there was no one person to whom I could turn for help. It was a tremendous relief to me when I learned that all I needed to do when I felt lost was to stop my car and ask someone for directions. It seems like such a little thing. It seems like such an easy thing. But for this child survivor, it was a little thing that people forgot to teach her, along with trust in the kindness of some strangers. Being in America was not the same as being in a war zone, although I think it was sometimes viewed that way. It was understandable in the context of the past; it was confusing in the context of the present, at least it was for me.

The theme of being lost and the feelings associated with it began to surface in dreams and nightmares too. I saw this as a good sign. We all dream, whether we remember our dreams or not. For years, I did not recall any of my dreams. They were buried. If I was awakened by a nightmare, I remembered only a general feeling of

fright but no details, no pictures, no interactions, no words. This has changed.

As previously planned, two weeks following my interview I traveled to Israel. I met with Yolanda Gampel, Co-Director of the Child Development Research Project in Tel Aviv. She moved me. That night I began to write the poem, "Oh...."

Oh....

She knew my story before the words fell from my lips

"Child survivor"

That is all I said.

She said, "Oh..."

She meant it

She felt it

It was as if she was crying inside...for me

I had never seen anyone do that before.

It was easier for me to cry for others

For my mother, for my father

For my unborn sisters and brothers

For my grandmothers - the one who left for Israel; the one who left for Theresienstadt.

I guess I was crying for myself

But I did not know it.

I told her I was one, an only child

She said, "Oh... no more in this country?"

I said, "No"

I could tell she knew what it meant

She knew that it made it harder...lonelier.

She slid her finger 'cross her closed lips

I said, "Yes, only silence"

She said, "Oh..."

No one in my life had ever said, "Oh..." the way she did.

Her hand went up and down slicing the air like one does bologna

"So many separations"

How did she know

And did she know them all?

I thought the tears would run outside and down my cheeks

I stopped...I could not cry

I was in my "doctor-clothes"

Then I wondered, "Is anyone ever in only one set of clothing?"

She moved on

She spoke about the projects in Tel Aviv and in New York

Asking me if I would interview others

Other child survivors.

I hesitated

I like to write

She wondered if she could find something for me to write

Or find something myself.

I thought she knows

I do not even know her...and she knows.

Her "Oh..." reverberates within me
For many years, there was no "Oh..."
No help, no recognition, no sound
No one like her who knew to say, "Oh..." and mean it.

Maybe soon I would be ready to answer her "Oh..."
With an "Oh, yes" of my own
Maybe soon I would be ready to open the floodgates to find
There was more than just tears awaiting me.

December, 1992

Chapter V. Breakthrough #3: I uncover profound feelings around my losses

In the spring of 1995, I contacted Helene Vernhes in France. I wanted to make a trip back to Angers, to where I had been so many years before. I hoped to recapture a piece of my story there, although I did not know what piece I would find. Helene had befriended us in Angers in 1939. I hoped, now at 80 years, she would meet me there again. I was overjoyed when she said, "Yes." She planned to have two of her children, Pierre and Francoise, join us.

I spoke of this journey at the next N\F Survivor Reunion in June, 1996. I told of being pleased to return to a reunion and to share the retracing of my steps in Angers, France and the impact on me of doing so.

A Child Survivor Searches for Memories

I looked around at dinner last night and thought of where we had been in 1938, the year I was born, and

- where we had been in the 40's, and
- the years of needed recuperation in the 50's.

I was glad to be here, at this reunion, and see where we are now, as we share stories and decide which entree to choose from a menu brimming with choices.

At my table, we also discussed "our stories" and the comfort and discomfort we felt in calling ourselves "survivors." We questioned: Were survivors only those who had survived the concentration camps, the most dehumanizing and devastating experiences of all, or were survivors also those who had experienced disruption under Nazi rule? These included those who had fled into the woods, went underground.... children, separated from parents and placed in unfamiliar settings: convents, orphanages, the Kindertransports and Christian homes. The definition of "survivorship" had broadened since 1945, but survivors themselves often had difficulty accepting that they now "qualified" as survivors. To many around the table, it still did not feel "right" to fully claim survivor-identity if one had not been in the camps.

I recalled how at the last Reunion in 1992, I had spoken on The Impact of the Holocaust on Our Children and Our Children's Children. The thrust of this talk focused on how to break Holocaust silences so that our children and the generations that followed would hear "in words" how the Holocaust affected us, emotionally, and changed our lives. I raised the question: How could we start, as best we could, to share memory and open intergenerational dialogues with our children and grandchildren. I asked how could we find ways to listen to our children's stories and their children's stories as we wished they would listen to ours. Of course, such an effort becomes even more difficult if one is not comfortable saying, "I am a survivor."

After I finished speaking in '92, a young woman came up to me and said, "You are a child survivor." "You should contact Judith Kestenberg and her study group in New York and the Child Survivor Group in Boston." Before that time, I had never heard the term "child survivor" used before, but I recognized that it fit. "Child survivor" put a name on what I had felt for years, that the Holocaust had impacted on me differently than it had on my parents - adult survivors.

I was a child of war, a Jewish child of war and a very young child of war. I had no life before the war. I had no memory, as we commonly think of it, of my life during my three years in Europe. And yet, the fear and terror already in my parents' daily lives impacted on my life. Without pictures, without words I could not tell a story. I could not say, "These are my memories."

For some of you, who are older survivors, this may seem like a blessing given what you have experienced and the details of which you might like to forget. I would say that you and I had different experiences. Each experience has its own set of difficulties and its own set of memory-gaps.

Memory is a complicated process. Memory of traumatic times is a more complicated process still. Professionals in the field of

"memory" now discuss the complexity of: traumatic memories, recovered memories, false memories, explicit memory, implicit memory, pockets of amnesia, selective memory.... Professionals recognize that there is still much to learn in the area of memory. How is memory encoded? How is memory stored? Do very young children remember? How is memory retrieved? What interrupts memory's smooth flow? And as we age, why do some memories return? In Holocaust families, there is also the issue of "memory kept silent," voluntarily.

When I spoke here some years ago and suggested that we should talk to the next generations, I did not realize that one of my difficulties would be that I had no stories and no feelings that I could remember and articulate about the impact of the Holocaust on me during my time in Europe.

What I had was a hollow sensation in my chest. It felt like an inner loss of something, not sufficiently described by the term "lost childhood" so often used to understand the experience of the child survivor. For me, it felt like there was an inner space, inside of myself, where something belonged but was not, and where the something that was had no language. I could not even say, "I have a feeling" because I had not had those bodily experiences around my very early life to say, "This is what I felt and this is what I did not feel." From my professional work, I knew that

visiting significant places might lead to the emergence of feelings from earlier times. For persons who are traumatized at very young ages, prior to the onset of organized language, implicit memories may surface, stimulating "remembering" and the finding of words to one's story.

With these realizations and knowing that some terrible things had happened to me and my mother in Angers, France, I decided to revisit the town of Angers. I was going to search for "memories," for "something," and see what I could find. I had no idea what the experience would be like. I only knew that without such an experience, I would never know what such an experience could be like for me.

The "story of Angers" that my mother told me, I can tell you. It went as follows:

> "I was four months old at the time of Kristallnacht. Two days afterwards, my mother and I left Nurnberg for Paris. After my father was interned by the French, my mother and I moved to Angers. Why Angers? Because it was hoped that moving to a small town and leaving a large city would provide us greater protection and safety. But Angers did not prove to be a safe place for us. On June 17, 1940, My mother and I and my mother's friend and her son were out walking on our street, the street of Rue Fulton. We had

been returning from the Town Hall to which my mother went daily in the hopes that our travel visas had arrived. Planes flew overhead; bombs were dropped. One bomb exploded on Rue Fulton and as we were flung into a doorway by its power, fragments hit us. My mother's friend, Hilde Lindheim, was killed; her son was left unscathed. My mother and I were wounded and separated. The visas had not yet arrived."

My own story of what happened at Angers was going to be the story of what I would find on this trip. On November 9, 1995, the anniversary of Kristallnacht, I arrived with Norman, my husband, at the Orly Airport, Paris, France. We were met by Pierre Vernhes. Pierre is also a child of war, two years older than myself. He seemed as eager as I to go back and retrace the steps of his early life in Angers. We travelled by speed train to get to our destination. Meanwhile, Francoise was driving her mother to Angers from Nantes. She too had been born during the War, two years after myself, and showed great interest in finding out where she had lived as a young child.

We met together at the Hotel de France. I first caught a glimpse of Helene as she stepped carefully down the circular staircase, holding onto the bannister and entering the lobby...a small, round-faced woman with a red scarf holding up her hair. I tried, but I was unable to conjure up any memory of her at all. As

I got up to meet her, her face broke out into a lovely smile and she greeted me with open arms. She clearly had a memory of having seen me before. As she reached out to hug me, she said, "Ma petite enfant; ma petite enfant." (My small child; my small child.) It felt funny to be embraced by someone from that time, someone whom I could not remember, but who could remember me. It felt nice. I liked Helene immediately. Wisely, Helene had hired an interpreter, Jurgen Bartelheimer, who spoke French, German and English. He was selected so that I could choose to speak French, German or English. Jurgen was a young man, very committed to our two days together and very interested in sorting out his own history as a second generation German (I was to find out more about this later.) We sat in the lobby of the Hotel de France, a Jewish child survivor, a non-Jewish family who survived the war with two children of war and a second generation from a German family. Norman was the only non-European. Not part of our group but interested in what we had to say, too, was the owner of the hotel. His father had owned the hotel before him and he remembered Jews being rounded up in the Square in front of the Hotel de France when he lived there as a child.

The entire first day we spent talking in the lobby of the Hotel: English questions/French answers with Jurgen being the bridge between the two languages. I was interested in all the vignettes that Helene remembered of that time. I was thirsty for my

history. I was interested to know if her stories would touch some hidden memory of mine. I wanted to know if she had any stories that she remembered about me, specifically, but she had none. As the evening hours arrived, we broke for dinner, happy to be all together. Afterwards, we retired.

The next day we walked, all day, retracing our common history and our unique history. I was glad not to have to return to the street of Rue Fulton alone. Helene led the way. It could have been 1940; we could have been walking on this street on a grayish day then...but it was not then. It was now. It was November 11, 1995. The street was quiet. We had left the Hotel de France together, admired the flowers in the Square, and made a right turn to cross the bridge over the railroad tracks, tracks that had carried my mother and me to Angers so many years before. The first street we came to was Rue Fulton. It was a narrow street, parallel to the railroad tracks. Helene tried to remember in which house my mother and I had lived. Pierre and his sister were looking around, talking together and walking ahead. Jurgen and my husband, Norman, were talking. I felt a chill run up and down my whole body; I wondered if I was going to be overcome. I wondered if I was going to get an image of being with people from years before: my mother, and her friend and her little boy, but I did not. Instead I felt an enormous sadness. Enormous. The tears welled up and overflowed. Norman turned and walked back to me and put his arm around me. The

others walked on. We stood still. It was a very quiet, yet, powerful moment. We let the others proceed as they looked for my former apartment and spoke with residents of the street. I took a deep breath.

Only with the days that followed and the months and now a year later, did I realize that I had come for this: not Helene's memory of what had happened to me - that would be her memory - but "a feeling" of my own, a feeling to which I would be able to connect my earliest image and find the words to my own story. My mother and I had been in the wrong place at the wrong time. While the immigration trail already held great worry and dislocation for my parents, I could remember none of these stops. However with my return, Rue Fulton would become the place where the first deep and overwhelming feelings of sadness and despair would break through for me.

The second place was to be on the hospital grounds. We piled into Jurgen's and Francois' cars to get there. Helene told me that the news of the bombing was immediately all over Angers and the news of which street had been targeted followed quickly thereafter. The street hit by the bombs was Rue Fulton. Helene came running from her place of work and despite the great chaos found our landlord. He told her that there had been two women in the street, a blonde and a brunette, and that "only" one had been killed; the

other was seriously wounded...though. Quite excitedly she got him to identify who was who. The blonde woman had died; my mother, the brunette was injured. She told us that she had great difficulty learning from him where we had been sent. Finally determining that we had been transferred to the Hopital d'Angers, she went there. It was at the hospital that pieces of shrapnel were removed from my scalp, while some, unknowingly, remained in my brain. Thereafter I was transferred to the Catholic orphanage on the hospital grounds. As close as we were - "on hospital grounds" - for a not-yet-two year-old, I could have been in a different country. Separated again. The severity of my mother's leg wounds and the need for the amputation of her left leg required that my mother remain in the hospital for four months. The doctor was sure my mother would not survive her wounds and told her so.

- If my mother had died before she had written my father as to where she was, he could not have located where I had been placed,

- If my father had not begun to look for us when he was released from the camp, my mother would have certainly been taken in the next round-up and sent to Auschwitz where she would have died given the weakness from an amputation,

- If the International Red Cross had not found my mother and me, I might have stayed in the orphanage and become a child who did not know her parents, did not know where she came from and could not claim her Jewish history. I would have become a French Catholic orphan as some did - protected in this way yet dispossessed.

There were so many, "ifs" and cracks through which I could have fallen.... I was the recipient of some very good luck in addition to the calamities that had befallen my family and me.

Now on November 11, 1995, I was returning to the hospital grounds. The hospital and orphanage buildings had been torn down and replaced. As I looked at these new buildings, I felt nothing. But the imposing facade of the Chapelle de l'Hopital had remained unaltered since 1940. Here I had the same welling up of feeling that I had had on Rue Fulton. It was here that tears spilled again and that the same sorrowful feelings, hidden for so many years, returned.

Some might say, "You went to Europe to find a feeling - only a feeling?" For me that was enough, more than enough; a real and powerful feeling was more than I had ever had before of my own experience. It was what I had come for, not knowing exactly what I had come for, nor what I was going to find. It was these profound feelings of sadness and grief around what had happened to me that I could now feel and connect with my earliest image and the place of its occurrence. I had found the beginning threads of my own story of personal loss, the story of the emotional impact of the Holocaust on me. My feelings had burst through and attached to them were words tied to a place where my own mourning process could begin. With time, I would also feel great joy and relief for what I

had discovered.

I recalled the interview with the Child Development Research Study in New York, the study that specifically focused on the impact of the War on the development of children. At that time, I was asked what my earliest memory was.

I said, "I have no memory; I have only an image."

She said, "Images can be memories."

I said, "I have this image of blood running down my face." That was all I said and I said it without feeling. I had no feeling, then.

It is different for me now. I have a feeling; I have a story. My story begins like this:

> "It happened on Rue Fulton and I see the street, next to the railroad station and over the bridge from the Hotel de France. I feel a feeling; I feel my tears; I feel the pain of being there with my mother and being there with a woman who was also a mother and who died of her wounds in front of me, no doubt bleeding profusely, as I was bleeding too, down my forehead and into my eyes. I feel how very wrong it was for this to happen to a little girl and her mother and a little boy and his mother, too. I feel grateful though that I returned more than fifty years later, with my husband, and that he held me in his arms and that the sorrow and pain of

that time could begin to come out: in tears, in feelings and in words."

Going back to Rue Fulton helped me piece together an early and tragic experience in my life

- that I could now begin to process and to mourn
- that I could now cry over, get furious over, and heal the emotional wounds of, and
- that I could now share with my children and share with my grandchildren, eventually, and to which I could say, thank God it is over, and we are here together.

My children would no longer have to intuit my pain because I could give it words. I could let it go in the face of the present joy of being alive and seeing them and seeing our family grow and continue. I feel that my pain from the Holocaust can never disappear, but with words I have found that it has "a place" in my life and no longer exists solely as a disruptive, inarticulate force.

Fifty years after the Holocaust, I was, finally, ready to search for the buried feelings of the past by returning to places where catastrophic events had take place in my life. I was ready to try and piece together the story of these events, with the story of my consequent losses and the feelings of my grief. I feel fortunate that I was able to activate this process by returning to Angers.

This summer, my family and I will spend some time together at the beach. I plan to share with them what I have shared with you, today. I hope with them to talk about my feelings, and

- their feelings of listening to this story, and
- their feelings of growing up with me before I could remember and tell such stories, and,
- their "sense" of my story before I found language to tell them about it.

A week ago, I was at my older son's home. His son, my grandson, woke me up at 6:15am, as I had invited him to do.

He said, "Grandma, I want to ask you a question; I do not know if you want to answer it."

I said, "I will try; you can always ask me any question and I will try my best to answer it." In my heart I knew what a gift it was for him to be able to ask questions...and such questions.

He said, " Mommy said that you have shrapnel in your brain."

I said, "Yes."

I was not tense; I was not silent; I was overjoyed that finally I was free to <u>find the words</u> to tell the beginning of my war story - on a six year old level - to my own grandson - to the THIRD GENERATION.

Then I knew that for me, the question fifty years later was

not "Who is a survivor?" We are all survivors. For me the critical question is how can we repair? How can we listen to each others' stories respectfully and to the stories of our children who grew up with us as parents traumatized by the Holocaust? How can we be empathic to each other's different experiences? How can we be caring and open and less defensive? How can we be sensitive to each other's losses and not compare, whose were less or more? How can we find our own personal ways to remember and share our remembrances so as to further the healing process? I hope increasing numbers of survivors and their children will feel ready to come to these reunions and talk with me and talk with others because I recall when I was not ready. I remember.

It is my feeling that for the survivor, the grieving process for the losses of the Holocaust will never end. It may be the reason that I held back from starting the mourning process for so long.

On Grieving

"You don't know what you'll be missing 'til it's gone"
That's what she said to me as she mourned her husband's death.

It was not simply the lying next to another person and the comfort that can give
It was the interstices that people come to fill within each other's lives
Twenty four hours a day.

She counted on her fingers the months that he'd been dead
Seventeen.

At first, there were so many feelings
She dared not feel a one for fear of going "crazy" with them all
Then someone gave her the "right" book
A book on grieving.

I wondered to myself was there a "right" book to give
Or was she just ready to begin again

"Begin what again?" she asked
Well, whatever began for you.

I listened to her as she told me how she began to recover
I listened to myself and thought how I would never recover.

I thought of all the things I had lost in my life
I thought, how nice it would be if I had the "right" book
I thought, how nice it would be if I had the "right" person to give it to me
I thought, how nice it would be if I were ready.

She interrupted and asked, "Will I ever be not-boring, again?"
I smiled at her
There was nothing to say
She knew I did not think her boring.

She was involved in housecleaning
Dusting off pieces of herself
Letting go of some
Reclaiming others.

It was a gift to share her grieving
I only hoped that one day I could do it for myself.

March, 1994

In the Holocaust, there were too many unimaginable losses. And yet, I no longer avoid grieving because of grief's endlessness. My writing helps me find words for my sadness. I write and rewrite a poem; I read it to myself and then I weep. It is a relief.

Schindler's List: They are not there

Schindler's List is the most sobering movie of the year
Taking command of history
Mr. Spielberg recorded episodes of the Holocaust
Through the opening of a camera's eye...through the lens of survivor experience
Not as a money maker for his future
But as a memory maker for his children
OUR CHILDREN.

Most of us could not talk with our children...for years thereafter
Not about our emigration on trains moving us from
shtetls to towns,
towns to cities and
cities to "foreign places,"
Not about the journey of the heart that forced us to let go of:
Shabbat candles,
kiddush cups, and
the hands of our children.

Some of us did not survive.

Schindler's List is a eulogy to those who died in Europe's ghettos
Schindler's List is a tribute to those who survived.

I cried...silently
Tears slipping out from corners of my eyes in steady streams
Like waters gliding over the smooth surface of Goshen stone
In places where the river's shallow.

What a tragedy it all was
What a tragedy it was for those who struggled valiantly and survived
What a tragedy it was for those who struggled valiantly and did not.

There were so many faces I wanted to cradle in my hand
There were so many children whose apprehension, I wanted to calm
There was my own terror as I ran down the streets with one young boy
Two steps ahead of the beats of Nazi boots upon the cobblestones.

No doubt many who had been there saw an image of themselves upon the screen
I looked and looked for someone like myself
Some one-year-old toddling toward her mother's arms
Or held on high in the strong hands of her father
I looked and looked.

Was every one-year old already murdered

Were babies no longer being born

Was my generation of toddlers from the ghetto gone

So that no one could say: I remember her, she was so young.

Then I cried out loud

I had come upon what the movie showed...by not showing

For some, no face remained

no voice

no tears

Had Spielberg made a mistake

Had he forgotten someone

Many someones?

No...

The full story of the Holocaust can never be told

No one's imagination can ever reach around the unabridged version

of such horrors and say: These are the "Completed Works"

No one can record it all...

...all the tortured

...all the separated

...all the murdered

...all the not-yet-begotten

Only a movie can end with credits.

In life,

nightmares surprise us as they surface in streams of memory we hoped were sleeping through the night, and

names of those who fell get stored as silently until new births reclaim their souls.

Schindler's List reminds us that it is "okay"...now,

To remember our history on the marquis of theaters and on the big screen

Schindler's List reminds us that it is "okay"...now,

To record our personal truths on tape recorders and video players.

But what about those one-year olds

What about my generation of toddlers who perished?

Did you notice?

You will not find them between book covers

You cannot find them on Schindler's List

Look for them...

Look for them with me and mourn.

They are not there.

February 7, 1994

Chapter VI. Breakthrough #4: I re-connect with my Holocaust family tree

I think the stories of a family tree are like the stories of the immigration trail. There exist the stories of facts and figures and there exist the stories that are emotional in nature. For the family tree, the stories of facts and figures focus on when people were born, when they married, when they had children and when they died. The emotional stories focus on the stories of who meant what to whom and what joys and sadnesses were passed down from life cycle events. I think of the Holocaust family tree as broken until repaired. The emotional fibers that hold the tree upright and keep it vibrant, from generation to generation, get torn asunder during the torrential rains of war trauma. Perhaps it was only in my experience growing up that the facts and figures of births and deaths were known and the details of family relationships, feelings, warmth, fights and reconciliations rarely found words. My father did not know his father and did not speak of his mother. My mother, only in later years, shared with me what growing up in Nurnberg was like, with a sister and brothers and holidays. As for myself, I had a role in this too. I did not ask questions. I was quiet, until I gained a consciousness that I could do something, myself, to get connected to my grandparent generation. When I arrived in America in 1941, I had three remaining grandparents. Two resided in Israel. They were my mother's parents, Alfred and Betty

Bamberger. They had emigrated to Israel from Nurnberg, Germany after Kristallnacht in 1938. One, Karoline Metzger, had remained in Nurnberg before being taken to Theresienstadt in 1942, where she died from lack of care...from neglect.

When I was eight years old my grandmother Betty, whom I called Granny, came to America from Israel to live near us. This was after my grandfather Alfred had died. She was the only grandparent I was to know, and I was grateful for this. When my grandmother Betty died in 1979, I gave the eulogy at her funeral. She was buried in New York, USA.

On my first trip to Israel in 1981, I visited my grandfather Alfred in the cemetery on the Mount of Olives. Norman and our children were with me. I visited grandfather Alfred again in 1995. I wondered what I would feel this time? Would there surface a meaning for me that had been lacking before? By now, my consciousness of being a child survivor had been awakened. I had spoken at the N\F reunion in 1992. In 1993, I had been interviewed by the Child Development Research Project. I had started to write poetry again. My interest in finding my grandparents had only grown with time.

In 1994, I visited my grandfather Max (Metzger) in the old cemetery in Nurnberg, Germany. In 1996, I visited my grandmother

Karoline (Metzger) in the cemetery of Theresienstadt. It feels "different" to speak of them all as "grandmother" and "grandfather," as they were never referred to in this way when I was young. Yet with each visit to a cemetery, as I was grieving for what had been lost, I had also the growing sense that I was reconnecting with and repairing my Holocaust family tree, reconstructing memories and constructing a "relationship" with each one of my grandparents.

Alfred Bamberger

On the night of Kristallnacht he was taken to Dachau
Released
He went to Israel
Years later I went to meet him there
On the Mount of Olives
A sanctuary for heroes.

Honored for giving counsel to the Haganah
He'd been trained in Germany's brigades
For which he'd earned the iron cross
Only to be "discharged" in the amphitheater of the next crusade.

His tombstone reads Avraham Alfred Bamberger
I did not know...
His name was Avraham
How could I not know his name?

I did not know many things about my grandfather
But his name
Of all things
I thought names did not get lost in the Holocaust.

October, 1995

In 1994, Norman's and my trip to Europe was planned specifically to visit my grandfather Max in the old cemetery in Nurnberg, Germany. I would learn that the old cemetery was the site of graves of many generations on my mother's side. But this time, I came specifically and determinedly to visit my grandfather Max, my father's father. I knew he was there because my father had visited him in 1967. I am glad my father was able to go and find his father. But I wonder: What did he feel - going? What did he feel - leaving - his father behind? I learned my father had gone to visit his father many years after he had done so. At the time I was told, my father had already died. I wondered why he had not told me?

Max Metzger

It is cold and rainy
The street is narrow
The entrance-way half-hidden
Keeps secrets locked from view.

Opening the rusted door
My mother's family greets us
Generations upon generations of headstones
Overturned and face down.

We stumble first across my maternal great great grandfather
Lying horizontal in the earth
We turn him straight and brush him off
A crane, immobile, speaks of efforts to right others damaged by the Nazis years ago.

Where is Max Metzger?
In the farthest corner
Six foot tall, in coat of black marble.
His newly etched name stands out.

Clothed in overgrown ivy
His name plate shattered

We find a shard still lying on the ground
Its message (l)ieb for "geliebter" from Karoline.

Norman prepares the ground and plants small shoots
As I lay stones from Westport
Kaddish said
I tell my grandfather where his family has gone.

Time passes
Daylight fades
I turn to say good-by
Against the darkening sky, I see him standing, still.

Outlined against the horizon
Majestic in his immobility
Marking the place of my family's history
Anchored to a place we once called home.

November 4, 1994

Theresienstadt, Czechoslovakia

Norman and I arrive in Prague, capital of the Czech Republic, on November 5, 1996. The small and narrow cobblestoned streets remind me of Nurnberg. So does the openness of the Town Square. People are friendly and try to be helpful despite the language barrier. From the cab driver to the concierge to the shop owner to the maitre d., there is an air of humility coupled with a determination to use their limited English. I know what it is like not to be able to speak the other person's language and I admire their lack of hesitation to put their English to use. I soon realize that many speak German here and so our lives and theirs with us is made much easier. I speak German with them.

I have come to Prague not to visit Prague specifically, though I am happy to enjoy its undisturbed architecture, many musical offerings, and plethora of restaurants. I have come to Prague as a stop on the way to meeting my last grandparent, Karoline Metzger, in the cemetery of Theresienstadt. As far as I know, she has had no visitors there. My father died before the Iron Curtain was lifted in Czechoslovakia and so he could not enter the country.

I have awakened very early this morning. It is still dark and the streets are quiet. The church bells cut through the stillness with their hourly ring. This is a Catholic country with beautiful

old churches and buildings left intact by bombings that destroyed Nurnberg in WWII. "Only" lives were disrupted. Synagogues have become museums. Cemeteries, overcrowded with headstones, have hardly room for family members to lay their stones.

I wonder if there will be a headstone for my grandmother in Theresienstadt for me to lay a stone for her. I wonder if she was buried or turned to ash. If buried, I wonder if she lies alone or with the bodies of others. If cremated, I wonder if her ashes were discarded in the River Ohre, as were so many others, obliterating evidence of wrong-doing. I wonder.

I am not like most visitors who come to Theresienstadt. They come to learn about the story of the camp. I come to meet my grandmother and talk with her. By now, I am good at making connections in graveyards, in using "place and imagination" to create stories and construct a family history for myself.

My grandmother last wrote to us from Nurnberg on September 5, 1942, in her own hand. I have her letters. I had them laminated for safe-keeping. She wrote (paraphrase), "Do not worry about me.....My thoughts are only for you and that you recover well from your ordeals." Her concern for us and not for herself touches me. I would learn that on September 11, 1942, she arrived in Theresienstadt. This is all I know. I have no memories of my own of

her from Nurnberg. There were no stories shared of her and me together. I do bring a picture of her though in my mind's eye from pictures in that one album that came from Europe. She looks old and white haired as she sits in her wheel- chair, a nurse beside her. In one picture, a dark-haired child sits on her lap. It is not me; I am blonde - like she was.

At First Glance.....and Yet,

At first glance,

the entrance to Theresienstadt looks like any forgotten and fortified town where inhabitants were born, raised and left to seek their fortunes elsewhere

And yet,

I know that more recently, the inhabitants were prisoners of war, not soldiers but the elderly, the young, the ill, the handicapped...Jews they hoped would die quickly and never depart.

At first glance,

the railroad tracks upon which we walk look as if they'd never been used

And yet,

I know that trains came here, unloaded Jews, and then made off.

At first glance,

the reality and horror is gone from the town of Theresienstadt. Barrack E-VII, where my grandmother perished is newly painted. Across the way, a woman plants rose bushes by her doorway; another strolls by with her baby.

And yet,

I know there is malevolence frozen in this place below the ground. I know my grandmother arrived with Transport 25 as #291 on September 11, 1942. Reason for incarceration: "Judin." She died September 23, 1942, twelve days after her arrival - a short time for a woman who had just written us letters.

At first glance,

the building of the "Terezin Ghetto Museum" looks like any museum with its gift shop on the left, filled with postal cards and books

And yet,

I know that the Theresiestadt Archives are here too with pages and pages of what happened to whom and when. I learn my grandmother was buried in a mass grave with others. The Archivist feels badly she cannot find which one. I tell her not to worry, the interred are one "family" now - all related to me.

At first glance,

my rationalization rings true

And yet,

I know, I am disappointed not to learn specifically where my grandmother rests in Theresienstadt; we move on.

At first glance,

I see a harmless looking building in the distance

And yet,

I know the sign says "Krematorium." At least, my grandmother Karoline was not incinerated in these ovens. My great-grandmother Gretchen was...turned to ash.

At first glance,

my mind still tries to deny the events of those years despite the chill of the stark and spotless autopsy room inside

And yet,

I know that it is here that crates of mutilated and murdered bodies were rolled on the flat surface of the trollies and into the ovens,

At first glance,

It is the kind of place you want to leave, quickly

And yet,

I know I must place my two memorial candles on the trolley. I cannot possibly leave without lighting them and reciting the Sheheheyanu prayer.

At first glance,

it may look odd to others, lighting candles in the Krematorium and saying a prayer of rejoicing

And yet,

I know, so many do not know where loved ones died and have no place to meet with them once again. I do. My great-grandmother, my grandmother and I are newly together. It seems only right to rejoice before reciting kaddish.

At first glance,

I wonder where to place the stone I brought to lay here for my grandmother

And yet,

I need not wonder long by which unmarked grave to sit. Our guide directs me to a special headstone marked "for those buried in a land that is not their own." I place my stone upon it and put my arm around the "monument" for a picture.

At first glance,

it appears to be just that, a pose

And yet,

I know it has a greater meaning. For me, the headstone comes to feel like my grandmother's shoulders. Headstone and shoulders meld as one. I put my arm around "her." My daughter is named for her. Carolyn Metzger for Karoline Metzger. I tell her the names of all the others...slowly, one by one. It is an historic moment.

At first glance,

it may look like just a regular cemetery visit

And yet,

I know, it is the beginning of a newly created memory of my grandmother Karoline and me. It is a day of birth; it is a day of death; it is the day of the funeral. A true burial can only be done with members of the family present, the next generations; I am here...now...the first one of her kin to return.

I whisper to her:

If you had to die here,

I feel glad you did not linger longer.

If you had to die here,

I am glad you were with family when you slipped away.

If you had to die here,

I am glad you were buried in the ground and not left floating somewhere in the river of the enemy, disrespected and lost to those who love you.

November 6, 1996

The One Grandparent I Knew

Her name was Betty
Granny to me
I knew her, not intimately because she kept things hidden
But I knew her
When she died, I gave her eulogy.

I remember when I first met my grandmother. I was eight years old. Granny was coming to resettle, once again. Her first move from Germany to Israel would be followed by her coming to America. With this move, I was finally going to have an everyday Grandmother, like I thought everybody had. I had longed for one not knowing that when she came to me she left my cousin in Israel, alone. I learned that only when I got older.

I remember clearly how she looked to me when I first opened the door of our Kew Gardens' apartment to her. She stood there, littler than I had imagined and appearing very, very old and tired. She did not stay that way for me. In her purse she had a candy, a fish, much like the gummy-bears my grandchildren like, but in the form of a fish. She rummaged around for it and gave it to me. It tasted like it had been there for a long, long time, waiting for me as I was waiting for a grandmother to give it to me. I was struck that my grandmother spoke English. Nobody had told me that my

grandmother would speak English.

With time, she was to tell me about the family, about Germany, about Israel, about her garden and her rabbits, and about her children when they were small. No one had told me stories like that before. It was as if they had forgotten what came before the war and I was too young to know to ask. She was to teach me German grammar and German writing. She would say, unless you can read and write in a language, you will forget it. "Understanding" a language when you listened to others speak it was not sufficient. When I was ten, she taught me the secrets of bridge. This turned out to be very important when I went to college. She took me to museums. We would stand in front of a portrait of Rembrandt as an old man. I do not know what she told me about him but whenever I see one of his portraits I think of my grandmother and me standing in front of him and I feel good. My grandmother took me to see many things. We walked and walked and visited many, many places. Everywhere we went my grandmother taught me something. Every so often, she took me to visit her Aunt Lina. Aunt Lina had been with my grandmother Karoline when she died in Theresientstadt. Meetings with Aunt Lina were to give me my first taste of seeing someone age, get ill and die a "normal" death.

My grandmother was a great lover of squirrels and she would feed them on her fire escape. I enjoyed watching her. They were

like pets for her and for me too. She fed them every morning and every evening, putting their food in a pie tin. My grandmother lived very simply after she left Europe and never complained about the changed circumstances in which she found herself. I came to admire this greatly in her.

I remember the day I went into labor with my first child, her first great-grandchild. I did not tell her and she did not tell me she knew. We did not want to worry each other. That is how it was with my grandmother and me. We did not talk about how we felt. I did not even tell her how happy I was that she had come to America to be a grandmother to me and fill some of the loneliness in my life. She must have known, but I sometimes wonder if we would have spoken more together had there been no war.

One day we visited what was to become Kennedy Airport in New York. Granny told me she would die before its completion. It frightened me a bit and I wondered how she knew. She turned out to be wrong. She ended up living a very long time, too long some might say, because she got quite ill for quite some time at the end of her life. It broke my heart to see her that way, more than it frightened me to hear her speak of death. From then on I wondered: Is it better to die too young or live too long? And what if you could choose to live too long, would you remember you preferred it that way when you got old and fragile?

When her dying came, it was due. She had been ill for ten years. On one hand, her dying gave me permission to put the last difficult decade of her life into the context of a 90 year life span. On the other hand, it was hard for me to let her go. I comforted myself knowing I was fortunate, coming from a survivor family, to have had a grandmother in my life at all.

"Eulogies note the passage of time
They mark a time of sadness
A time of peacefulness
A time for remembering
A time for sharing memories of a grandparent we (I) knew."

Adapted from eulogy given on 12/3/79

Commentary:

I started out to find my grandparents in the cemetery because of the loss I felt "not having grandparents" in my life growing up. I thought I just wanted to meet them, individually, and create memories for myself with each one and feelings around meeting them this way. "Only" one of my grandparents died in a camp and yet all of my grandparents were buried in cemeteries in different countries from one another, dispersed by the war. My father was buried in a different place still. Very possibly without the war, all my grandparents would have been buried in the Nurnberg cemetery as were generations before them.

I know that my journeys to the cemeteries were to collect my grandparents, but upon reflection, I think in a way quite different than I had originally imagined. Visiting my grandparents in the cemeteries turned out to be the first step in a process of more. As I understand it now, I was collecting their memory to fill the spaces their absences had created in my life. As I thought about my grandparents and my trips to see them and as I wrote about these experiences, I found that what I was looking for was a common place for them and me to be. That one place in common could not and should not be a graveyard. That one place in common - for them and me to be - could only reside within myself.

Visiting the cemeteries was a way to establish a sense of continuity with all of them. It proved to be not only a way for me to mourn my losses, but a way to repair for myself, emotionally, what I felt to be the emotional break in the family tree caused by the Holocaust.

Grandparents hold a very special place in the hearts of their children's children. My grandparents did for me. Now, as I shut my eyes, I can see them all. I can feel them near to me, inside myself. I have their memories; I have my own memories of meeting them, all four of them, finally.

When my own grandchildren get older, I will tell them this story. I will tell them the story of how I went looking for my grandparents in the cemeteries of the world, how I remember my finding them, how I remember re-connecting with them and how happy I was to do so, so happy that I cried.

Chapter VII. Breakthrough #5: Through the concrete wall

Sometimes I want to write something down. I do not know why. I have an idea or a feeling, I want to put into words. These words get written out and rewritten and read repeatedly to myself, silently and aloud, until a rhythm begins to form which moves the writing forward. With each rewrite a broader meaning and richer meaningfulness unfold. As a song repeated to oneself gains greater depth, a poem upon rewriting achieves a clearer focus.

Writing my poems is a way of talking to myself before I talk with others. It is an inner dialogue, a conversation, put down on paper for me to see. Then it is read and rewritten, read and rewritten, read and rewritten until I find the words closest to what I want to say.

As I write my poems, I
listen to my inner voice
record the words as I hear them
view them on the page
resonate to the rhythm of each emerging beat
listen for true meaning
and rewrite.

Back and forth, back and forth, the piece is not done for the day 'til I go back and forth, back and forth, back and forth.

That is how it was with the creation of the poem, "Through the Concrete Wall" - a writing and rewriting.... Each version shifting a little here and changing a little there until I found more clear and penetrating language to describe my inner experience of breaking through.

The writing of such a poem continues beyond this chapter. My breaking-through years of silence cannot be captured in one series of verses or one chapter or even a single volume. Breaking-through silences is a life-long process which requires continual reworking and expansion as unforeseen chapters emerge.

Through The Concrete Wall

I - The wall

II - Meeting you

III - Uncertainty

IV - My pain

V - Not ready

VI - A comment on trust

VII - The wall opens

VIII- I emerge

IX - Through layers of the concrete wall

I

I lived inside a wall for a long, long time.
Stonewalled
Protected from others' indifference
Protected from baring sensitivities carved deeply within the inner reaches of my soul
World War II remembered.

The wall was concrete
Roughly textured with a surface of gray grit
Enclosing me as I hid
Safe in my self-created isolation.

Protected from the outer world
Scant attention paid to what lay buried deep within
I was isolated.
Like a bear in winter, I was asleep and breathing
Unlike a bear, I did not emerge each spring.

Others could not see I lived inside a wall
I could not see me.

I could not see the wall.

II

One day, I met you
Your eyes fixed upon me
Looking directly at me and through my wall to the inside
You touched my soul.

Wishing to run away to deeper depths
Unable
I felt held...spellbound
Watching another human being watching me.

All was still
Like the quiet in the woods when nature sleeps
I, too, was still.

You were not bothered by my quiet
My silence did not put you ill at ease
Your calm matched that within my inmost self.

III

Slowly,
My hand reached out to touch you
Unsure, it made a fist as if to strike
Then opened up again.

I looked around and lifted
An imaginary "rock of Sisyphus"
Held high
I threw with all my might in your direction.

Showing you what I felt inside
Telling you how it felt to me
Watching you
Watching me.

Fear and hope
Dread and heightened expectation
Like a seesaw
Back and forth.

Caught
I held my breath
Coming near

To push away.

You did not seem to think it strange
You did not flinch
You did not move
You did not look away.

Did I want to push you
Did I want to hurl myself against you crushing you
Did I want to smash the inner wall surrounding my imprisoned self
Did I want to get out?

It was like a dream
I wondered
Why try to bang against a wall at all
To see if it is strong enough
To see if you are strong enough to bear the weight of my despair
To see if I have courage enough to face the fear of the unknown?

Uncertainty.

IV

Long ago, the world rejected me without caring who I was
Could you bear to listen to this story
Could you bear the pounding...the thundering of each new wave as it
collapsed upon the seashore
Could I bear to tell you what I feared to feel?

I began to wonder
How does one get free and would I ever
Ever find the sign...called "Exit"
Ever want to follow it...once found?

I tried to climb the wall once
Getting to no where
Bleeding
I stopped.

I had bled before
I remembered Nazis killing civilians with shrapnel
I remembered blood drops running down my face into my eyes
I remembered when I closed my lids to catch my soul and it had fled
already.

That is when the wall sealed shut

No one was let in

I was not let out

I had not noticed, then.

V

My eyes open
I see the wall
I see the shadow of a crack
I see its line.

I do not feel afraid
I do not truly feel
Maybe a crack is there
And that is all.

I fall asleep
I reawake
The crack remains
In place.

I make a fist
Exploding through the wall
I make a hole and leave my arm suspended there
Surrounded by a jagged edge.

I am not cut
I am not hurt
I am not bloodied

I am surprised.

Closer to the outside world

I pull my arm inside

You watch me - still

I wonder what you see.

VI

I remember a story:

A little girl of three
Lived behind a wall.
Her mother said, "Go"
And gave her to a stranger
By the ghetto's edge.
Lifted over
To the other side
Dropped
Into the hands of another
For a distant hiding place
With only her mother's prayers for safekeeping
She vanished.

The child in me was dumbstruck
I could barely breathe
Is this how you survive
Is this how you are freed from tyrants
Trusting the unknown
Trusting what you cannot see?

Is this trust
Or is this what happens when there is "no alternative"
When the world abandons you and you have but one choice

To run and hide.

VII

Hiding is like a death
Hiding in the "right" places allows you to return to the living.

Was someone going to lift me over my wall in some miraculous way
The next morning might I be on the other side
Freed and in a safer hiding place
Knowing what trust is?

I wondered
Would it happen that way?

One day, the crack outlined a door upon my wall
Curious...I opened it
There you were
Standing...calm.

I reached out to you
Taking your hand, I beckoned you inside
You bent your head to enter through the archway
And stayed.

I never asked myself, could I trust you
Trust had grown and shown itself this way

With you
That is how I came to recognize what it felt like.

Funny, for so long I thought
It was a getting out from behind those walls that needed doing
I learned
It was inviting someone in to see the scorched earth of my soul.

My longing to be touched
    may have cracked the wall
My pent-up passion, rage and sorrow
    may have cracked the wall
Meeting you
    may have cracked the wall
The courage in my soul
    may have been ready to say, "Now"

It may have been them all
That opened up the wall.

VIII

I close my eyes and hear the pounding of the surf
I feel the power of the breaking waves
Not on the beach front...not against the outer wall
But within.

Something thunderous is crashing
Deep inside of me
It echoes in my ears
Overcoming the drumbeat of my heart.

I can feel its power rising
Terror escalating
Through my being
Trembling
The wall around my soul
Its final layers
Going
D-I-S-I-N-T-E-G-R-A-T-E-S.

Something deep inside of me is moving
I am moving
I am emerging from my hiding place
I am moving to the outside.

Spring has come
Rain is falling on the dewdrops
I can see it!
I can hear it!
I can feel it!
Years of silence drop away.

I am breathing
Listen.

My soul is reconnecting
Listen.

I am breathing deeply
Listen.

Things so many take for granted
I can finally do.

August, 1995

IX

This inner wall
Its layers gone
Transformed
Has opened to a broader sphere.

Recast
I too am less confined
I run and jump and leap inside
Carefree.

Ongoing

It is hard to explain how a person gets through the concrete wall. For me, it was like the writing of this poem - a process. However, unlike the solitary setting demanded for the writing of a poem, for me, breaking-through required the presence of another person, someone who would listen, someone who would respond, someone who would hear what I could initially barely get myself to say. Entering psychotherapy proved helpful to me in my efforts to free myself. This is not always true for everyone and was not true for me in the beginning. However, eventually I found I could feel safe with another person. In this shared space, long buried internal thoughts and feelings around my pain, grief, rage, fear, determination and strength found language and I began to speak, truly speak to another again.

Within this setting, a newly activated sense of hope emerged. Desires to reclaim my personal history by traveling to places in my past were awakened and, in turn, stimulated an "inner" effort of intense introspection. Such introspection stimulated other activities such as the writing of poems. I experienced a weaving, back and forth, between external efforts, internal re-alliances and self-reflections. Slowly, trust in another person grew and with it a sense of trust within myself and a decreased need for self protection. Deeper seated feelings and memories emerged, ones that had seemed too overwhelming for me to address before and so were kept behind the concrete wall of silence. The wall of silence was

anchored in terrors, often unbeknownst to me, which helped keep silence intact for most of my lifetime. However, with the development of trust, the wall lost its base, its need for existence and therefore disintegrated. Slowly, I stood free of it.

I did not fall

I did not collapse

I was not overcome with fears or tears.

Instead, I learned something that textbooks cannot teach. I "learned" that one can run and jump and leap inside - carefree - and land stably back on one's own two feet, only when one is free of the concrete wall surrounding the self. The breakthrough in the illusion that silence provides safety allowed me to feel more truly secure within myself and ready to enter a broader sphere of personal existence.

Chapter VIII. Beyond the concrete wall and onward toward a broader sphere

When I entered Cornell University in 1956, it was eleven years after the end of the war. No one spoke about the Holocaust. I was not ready and no one else seemed ready to tackle the traumas that genocide had inflicted on the living. When I returned for my thirty-fifth reunion, it was the fiftieth anniversary of liberation. Times had changed; I had changed. What a difference years-gone-by had made in the world's focus on humanistic issues; what a difference their passage had made on the world's silence on matters of the Holocaust and on my silence on matters of the war.

Before the Reunion-weekend I debated with myself whether or not to go. Then I called the alumni office at Cornell University to ask if someone was scheduled to speak on the Holocaust, at this momentous time, the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the war. They said, "No" and invited me to do so. I, who had not spoken of her Holocaust history to but one person during her college years, was now being asked to speak to a broad reunion-audience of classmates, alumni from other classes, Jews, non-Jews, members of survivor families and professors who study genocide. What a change this would be for me and I would learn for those returning, too.

When I graduated in 1960, my class was known as part of the

"silent generation" in a "silent society." None of us talked about the war. Our discussions had focused on "big" topics like the existence of God and the opposite sex; few of us got involved, then, with issues of war, racism, sexism, anti-semitism, abuse, poverty and concrete walls. These issues would be the concerns of classes that followed ours and would become our concerns as we got older. Personal trauma was not on our agenda. The trauma of the Holocaust was not real to most and remained unacknowledged by those few of us who were survivors in attendance at Cornell then.

X. Outward Bound

Break through the concrete wall
expand the inner courtyards
of yourself
gain entry to the spheres of outer worlds.

Awake, awake to others
awakening on the path
outward
bound for layers of the surround.

With each new movement forward
find:
    distances reduce
    pains diminish
    compassions flower.

Time passes
wisdom increases
teaches:
    what makes humans feel
    less different from one another
    than they think they are
    is always a victory.

June 4, 1997

Years before I ever went to college, I went to summer camp. Perhaps it was preparation for the leaving from home for college, which would occur years later. The first time I left for camp, I was four years old. It was the summer of 1942, one year after I had arrived in the United States and very soon after the disruption I had experienced in Europe. I went to summer camp every year thereafter. These early separations were bewildering to me. They required that I make sense of a "new" world again, a world that was unfamiliar and operated in a language I did not understand. Other children appeared to understand much more easily than I did what was going on. Things that seemed funny to them did not make me laugh. I did not understand what was funny. I sometimes wondered if it was something I had done or said that others thought was strange. Their laughter embarrassed me. It made me feel like I did not fit in, and even looking back I do not think I did. It was not as if others consciously excluded me from their gaiety, but no one tried to bring me in.

After some years, I got used to speaking in English and I got used to going to camp. I began to look forward to going away in the summer. I started to enjoy the freedom, the fresh air of the natural surroundings, the new children to meet and the new things to learn. Each year, I returned with a new face on; I tried out how it felt to be this way or that. I observed how other children acted and I thought about what I liked and what I did not like in their

behavior toward each other. It was like I "practiced" different ways of being - more outgoing, less outgoing, more jocular, not more serious because I was the most serious child I had ever met. It was as if I was trying to see what fit me and fit the situation in which I found myself.

Those months when I did not attend camp, I attended public school and spent much of my "other" time with my mother. She liked me to come home after school, maybe even needed me to be there. In school, I was a good student; I participated in some clubs; I even held a class office in high school. However with hindsight I do not think of these years as years I spent much time getting to know other children or learning how to fit in. I did belong to a Brownie troop which I enjoyed and even visited the homes of a few girls. But in general I felt very different, although I do not think other children were aware of this.

When it came time for me to go to college, it felt like I was preparing to leave home as I had done so many times before to go to camp. I knew no one else who was preparing to go to Cornell. On the day for leaving, I went by train and by myself. When I arrived in Ithaca, New York, I stepped off the train in my beige suit, beige pillbox hat and beige gloves. Someone snapped my picture. The next day, I appeared on the front page of The Cornell Daily Sun, the school's newspaper. Whenever I looked at that picture years later I

thought, "a European coming to college in America." I certainly looked different from the others. I mean, what freshman at that time went to college wearing a hat and gloves? I had not discussed with kids from high school what clothes to wear to go to college. It was not something I discussed with my parents either. We did not speak about things like this. And yet, pillbox hat and all, it was pretty exciting - going to college, being photographed and starting "camp." Camp had been good practice. By now, I knew how to go to new places, alone. I anticipated that I might not fit in, without ever giving up the hope that I might.

Cornell University is a beautiful school in a beautiful location. That was one of the reasons I chose to go there. Cornell rests in a pastoral countryside that stretches for miles and miles providing a marvelous palette for all seasons. I liked the students I met in my freshman dorm and I loved the freedom of college life, even though at that time women lived by the curfew clock. I found the courses much more interesting than the ones I had taken in high school. Like many at that time, I joined a sorority and in my last year was elected its president. I graduated in three and a half years in January, 1960, to be nearer to Norman, whom - not so surprisingly - I had met in summer camp. At Cornell, I was elected to Phi Beta Kappa and received a national teaching fellowship for graduate school. I felt good about these accomplishments in a private sort of way. I remember a friend of mine was surprised that

I had done so well. I guess I never told her; I never told anyone that I received good grades. My parents did not make a big fuss over them; I did not make a big fuss over them. This was another area over which silence hovered.

As for my Holocaust history, I remember speaking with only one classmate during all my college years about my being a Holocaust survivor. This was in my first year and in response to her incredulity at my being Jewish. She, herself, was not. It was she that I told of my credentials - some of my credentials. At that time, I did not know them all myself. I shared with her the little I knew of stops on the "immigration trail" that had led to my getting out of Europe. I hid behind the concrete wall then without even knowing that there was one.

Now on June 10, 1995, and sponsored by Cornell's Hillel, I would speak on: "Breaking Holocaust Silences: Listening to the stories of the Survivor and the stories of the Second and Third generations." I would combine a telling of my own story with the stories I had heard in the second and third generation groups I facilitated. These groups were part of the project I had founded: Intergenerational Healing in Holocaust Families (Appendix A) at the University of Massachusetts in 1993. By then, I had begun reading all kinds of Holocaust materials: memoirs by survivors, memoirs by the children of survivors, and journal articles and books on family

dynamics, genocide, trauma and intergenerational transmission of traumas. I was viewing movies on the war that I would have avoided before. I was renting videos of old movies that I had avoided before. I thought about what the impact on me was to see such things. I felt like I was doing a "homework assignment." I felt I needed to get better informed historically on the facts and figures about what had happened - when - in 1933 to 1945 in Europe. I still could not make sense of the war and I hoped study would clarify this for me. I immersed myself in Holocaust material. I no longer wanted to avoid or deny things. I felt I could face the consequences of feeling feelings, claiming memories and gaining insights about myself. I joined a Child Survivor group in Boston and a study group on the Transmission of Holocaust Trauma in Boston, too. When I spoke in different countries on different continents on my Holocaust work, I began to make special efforts to meet with other persons working in the area of Holocaust, particularly those with a survivor history. In Israel, I met with Dan Bar-on of Ben Gurion University of the Negev and Haim Dasberg of AMCHA, both child survivors, and both willing to share their personal Holocaust stories and the professional paths they took that led them to work in the field of Holocaust. Dan shared his efforts to bring together children of Jewish survivors and children of Germans, some of whom were perpetrators - some of whom were not; Haim shared how he was propelled into Holocaust work after having been asked to evaluate survivors for reparations. Overwhelmed by

the numbers of stories he heard, he realized others' stories were just like his: desperate stories from a "crazy time." Dan's and Haim's personal stories were moving and their interest in my story exhibited a respect and an understanding that

- "being young" made it very difficult,
- "being wounded" made it very difficult, and
- "being separated from one's parents" made it very difficult to trust - anyone at all.

All our projects were focused on making the Holocaust experience for others count. We worked to help others break silence, get their memories validated and create connections for themselves. We acknowledged that at the same time we were also working on our own issues. Our histories and our work were different in their particulars but alike in their overall framework. It was a pleasure to meet them and others, too.

One evening before reunions, I received a telephone call from a college friend asking me if I was going to return to that place "far above Cayuga's waters" for our "35th." I told her that I was and that I was scheduled to give a "Holocaust talk." I told her I was a child survivor of the Holocaust. She said, as if affronted, "How come you never told me you were a Holocaust survivor? I knew you came from Europe - but a Holocaust survivor!" I told her I had not purposely kept something from her. I had not even known she knew I came from Europe. I told her that when she knew me in

college, I could not speak about this part of my life and barely acknowledged the implications for me in my life of having survived the Holocaust. She had not been singled out as someone not to tell. Only one person knew I was a Holocaust survivor and if others did, they did not tell me. She said jokingly, "Eva Brown you are finally coming out." She did not know how true her remarks would be.

Now, thirty-five years later, I would return to Cornell and speak to an audience at a Reunion weekend and tell them what I had learned about the Holocaust since we had last gone to school together. I felt both excited and nervous at this prospect. When I accepted the invitation to speak, I had not thought about what they might have learned about the Holocaust since we had last met and what they might feel about me with all our Holocaust veils lifted.

Anticipatory anxieties surfaced almost immediately. Would my classmates understand what I had gone through or would they too think that I had been too young, spoke with too little of an accent or looked too different from images they now held of survivors? In the end, would they feel too uncomfortable with the knowledge that they had known a survivor in college and yet had not known her at all. This was the largest and most varied audience I was to speak to about my personal history. I would not be speaking as a survivor sharing her story with other survivors. I would be speaking as a Cornellian sharing her story of felt-difference with others with

whom I had attended Cornell. These would be friends of mine from another era in my life,

- where the Holocaust had not been a part of our lives together,
- where silence over matters of persecution had reigned, and
- where the breaking of a silence would have unknown repercussions.

It would be a new arena of listeners for me, one I hoped I could trust with my story and one I hoped I could trust to want to understand.

As the time drew closer, I debated with myself: should I talk about my personal Holocaust story or should I take refuge in my professional work on Holocaust? An "intellectual approach" seemed easier and safer, and yet would not the road of safety bypass an opportunity for me to be more open, here at Cornell? I certainly would not learn about the changes I had made in my life if I hid behind the screen of my work. I decided to throw caution to the winds and trust the people I had known "then" with the parts of me I had found since. I wanted to re-introduce myself. I wanted to make our time together count. I wanted to transform this time together from a time of reunion frivolity to a time of serious consideration of the impact of genocide on human lives.

When the day came, I spoke about my personal story. I wove its

themes through the warp and woof of my professional work with the second generation. I had been meeting with one second generation group for over two years. The following poem, "Children of Survivors Know" reflects my work with them, my work with others and my own thoughts as a child of survivors, a child survivor, a survivor-parent, a survivor-grandparent and that of the listening-professional. It is a poem that reflects my many identities - personal and professional. It is a poem that bears witness to the voices of others and the various voices within myself. Silent voices that do not speak aloud, but know what lies near to the heart.

Children of Survivors Know

I do not know their parents
I only know the stories their children tell about their wounded parents
I hear how hard it was for the children
Many children
My heart weeps for both generations
And for the pain of the next to come
If their inheritance is silence.

Numbers burned into arms
Synagogues burned to the ground
History burned into memory
Parents cannot forget their twisted lives
Wrenched by the violence in history.

For some, whole families gone - whole villages
Remaining only are spectacles of yesterday's nightmares
Coloring occurrences of today...
How can it be otherwise?

The killings and the bombings and the burnings
Are never over...
The terror and the panic and the dashed hopes

Are never over...

The pain, the grief, the silent sobbing
Are never over.

Survivors tell their story in the way they raised their children

- they could not hold them close enough to ward off the horrors of the night
- they could not entrust their welfare and well-being to another
- they, themselves, could not feel safe and without fear - it had happened once, it could happen again

And their children know.

Survivor parents pray for their children
They pray for continuity through the names they give their children
They pray through the memories they try to keep alive
And their children know.

Somewhere, somewhere in the recesses of their children's being
Their children know
Silent witnesses to parents' pain
Their children know.

Children of survivors know their lives are different from those of other children

Listen...

Listen to their stories of living with the hunted

Listen to their stories of living with the haunted.

Children of survivors know:

peacetime is an appearance

genocidal impulses lurk nearby

images of murder, mayhem and desperation darken their parents' faces - like black clouds shadow a countryside.

Common perceptions of unsafety

Common feelings of uncertainty

Common concerns for their own children

Common worrying for the world.

Children of survivors know

Wars kill

Wars kill parts of all souls that remain including those that follow

Children of survivors know.

As the Paul Reveres of yesterday

They broadcast insights to forewarn the world

Will people listen...

Will we listen...

Will we listen to the story of the children of survivors

For...

THEY KNOW.

November 17, 1993

After the "meeting" was over, I was barraged with questions and a desire by some to share their own Holocaust stories publicly. Survivors spoke; some of the second generation spoke; a spouse of a second generation spoke.... At the end, a man came up to me and introduced himself as a former high school classmate of mine, now a Cornell math professor. He asked me, "How do I fit in - neither my parents nor grandparents were survivors, but....?" I was familiar with this question from others who had spoken to me at other talks I had given. I was familiar with this question for myself: "How do I fit in; how would I fit in; how would I be included or would I be excluded?" I was familiar with this question from members of the second generation who had called me when I founded the project on intergenerational healing. Some would ask: "Do I qualify?" "Do I fit in?" They were unsure if they "fit into" a second generation group because their survivor-parents were unsure as to whether they could "legitimately" claim a "survivor identity." One caller told me that her father spent the entire war underground, in the resistance. When he surfaced he learned his whole family had been murdered. The disruption to his life and the death of his entire family did not seem to him "sufficient" reason to allow himself to feel "qualified" to call himself a "survivor." Why? In his opinion and at that time, he felt he had not suffered "enough" as compared to the inhumanity directed toward those who had suffered in the camps. That was then. Survivor definitions have broadened now. But not in time for his daughter growing up who needed to ask me, "Do I

qualify?" These things flashed through my mind in the brief space between my high school classmate's question "Where do I fit in?" and my response, "Why don't you tell me your Holocaust story?" I knew by now that anyone who wondered about where they fit in, did fit in somehow. Just the wondering indicated that there was a buried Holocaust story or not so buried Holocaust story hidden somewhere inside themselves that they too wanted, needed and had to tell to anyone who would listen and someone who might understand.

His first response to my question, "Why don't you tell me your Holocaust story," was that he did not have a Holocaust story. I was quiet. He said, "I am not the child nor grandchild of a survivor." I listened. Then he told me the following:

> "Neither my parents nor my grandparents were survivors. But my grandparents lost family in the Holocaust. They and my parents were very concerned about what was occurring in Europe. In a way, my home was like a way-station. We had standing boxes of clothing and food supplies. We would house a family temporarily when they came over. When they had made their connections, they would leave, taking some of the clothing and food with them. Their coming and going affected me deeply."

This sounded like a Holocaust story to me, a story in which a person, in this case a child, was deeply affected by the impact of the Holocaust on his parents and their behavior regarding the

suffering and needs of survivors. And in addition, he himself was a part of a household where survivors lived, if briefly, after they fled from Europe. I asked him if he did not think this was a Holocaust story. Hesitatingly, he said, "Yes." I said, "Yes...we must find you a name, a `Holocaust family name'." The names familiar to me so far: survivor, child survivor, second generation, third generation are not broad enough to include a "third generation in the extended Holocaust family." But because I did not have a name for him did not mean that he did not fit into the family of Holocaust memory. We simply needed to create a broader sphere for inclusion. As I knew so well, finding a name was central to claiming one's story and feeling that one's feelings and identity around Holocaust memory were legitimate and worthy of trying to be understood.

That night at a class dinner so many classmates seemed to want to tell me their Holocaust story and have me listen. I felt they wanted to connect with me around a topic we had <u>all</u> ignored so many years ago. I was amazed and astonished; I was pleased and delighted. In a way, it was like the meetings with Dan Bar-on and Haim Dasberg - with some differences. It seemed my classmates were moved by my effort to share my Holocaust story with them, and encouraged to share with me how the Holocaust had impacted on their lives. Of course, they were not survivors, and yet there was a beauty to this too - to be able to speak with non-survivors and to

be so received. In a way, it was as if the locks of the Panama Canal had been opened and a new channel through which we could reach out to each other had become unblocked. I thought, "Just think if I had never brought up the Holocaust." I would have never known that they too had a Holocaust story and were looking for the right to claim it. I would not have realized that they too wanted to break a silence - with me -and express their pain and longing to be included in the family of Holocaust memory.

My broken-silence broke others' silence. My broken-silence broke through my unawareness that other classmates:

- had not known the importance of their Holocaust stories
- had not known what everything meant - even though their native tongue was English, and
- had not known where they fit in and if they would and could be included and accepted.

In many ways, as much as my school and camp mates were not like me, they were just like me.

Fifty years after the war and at Cornell, everyone knew someone who had survived the Holocaust. And if they did not know someone personally, they had seen Schindler's List or visited the Holocaust Museum or Yad Vashem or read a survivor memoir or a book on Holocaust history. All had been affected by these "Holocaust experiences" and now wanted to talk about it with someone who was

open to talking about Holocaust experience. It seemed to me that the Holocaust was becoming the property of everyone and it seemed a good thing. No one owns "the Holocaust" nor owns the only right to talk about it. In fact, as more people talk about the Holocaust, the more of us who lived through it may feel our experiences recognized. And for those who now live through present-day holocausts a language for confronting genocide will be validated so that murder will be called by its right name: "murder" and will be identified as unacceptable by increasing numbers of people all over the world.

It dawned on me that my decision to come out of hiding at Cornell and to share broader and broader spheres of myself allowed me to experience something which had been closed to me before. My desire to have others "understand" grew as I became aware that - in a different way, but in an important way just the same - others wished to have their Holocaust stories valued too. True, my Holocaust experiences were different, very different from theirs, but the desire to be listened to empathically and compassionately could only be met when one of us took the first step - to break through layers of concrete walls.

XI. Beyond the Concrete Wall

In broader spheres
Safer
Unafraid to speak
I say aloud what I believe is true.

The pounding in my chest
The longing to break silence
Express - articulate
Bursts through.

The concrete wall is not unique to me
Finding it in myself
Lets me see deep in others
Where lies this universal property.

I close my eyes and hear the echo of its crashing walls
I see the opening into broader spheres
I sense the possibilities of what can be
If we confront together - its restrictions.

Children suffer by our silences
We suffer by our silences
Silence magnifies
Our perception of the massiveness of concrete walls

And intimidates.

January, '97

Sometimes one is fortunate enough to find a friend where walls disappear.

The Accent

The most comforting things in my home were the accents
Whenever I hear someone speak with an accent I turn my head
Sometimes, I am surprised
The person does not resemble their accent.

I do not speak with an accent
Well, sometimes I do
But only to myself
Most people do not think I speak with an accent.

We met in the park...one day
She and I
She with her accent
And me without mine showing.

As we got to know each other better, I gave her a poem
Not easily shared
It carried pieces of my soul
Within the lines and spaces - within the words - within each character.

She called me afterwards to say:

It made me cry

I never knew you had it so hard

I never thought about the time you did not speak English

You have no accent.

I said: I know

It does not show.

Then I asked her how she picks her friends

How she picked me to be her friend

She said: Vibrations

She chose her friends by their vibrations.

At first, I laughed

I said: There must be something more

She said: No

You had a real-ly good vibration.

Slowly, I understood

Our friendship was based on a reciprocity of valuing

Vibrations - with the accent on the ones

That transcend walls.

1993

IX. I muse on the whereabouts of God and other matters

Does anyone survive the Holocaust and not ask questions about the whereabouts of God, the "what ifs" in life and what happens when a loved one dies? Perhaps these questions are asked eventually within the context of everybody's lifetime.

Where was God?

A child of the Holocaust asked
Where was God?
Where was God?
No one answered.

God was not in the nooks and crannies of the bunkers
Nor in the gas chambers
Nor in the crematorium
Yet, some prayed, there.

God was not in the hard crusts of bread distributed at mealtime
Nor in the gruel called soup
Nor in the rotting fruits, meats and vegetables
Yet, some prayed over broken bread, together.

God was not in the work areas
Nor in the boxcars
Nor in the massive brown holes dug for graves
Yet, some prayed saying kaddish for the dead as they themselves were dying.

The child of the Holocaust asked
Where was God?

As if we should be looking for God in places made by humans to murder humans
Concentration camps surrounded by barbed wire
With smoke stacks belching sacred souls.

Six million Jews - murdered!
Gypsy, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses - murdered!
One and a half million children - murdered!
Those not yet born - murdered!

Parents who lost children ask
    Was God dead during the Holocaust
Siblings who lost sisters and brothers ask
    Was God dead during the Holocaust
The last ones living ask
    Was God dead during the Holocaust
Children ask not, "Was God dead," they ask the whereabouts of God.

Even when they have lost parents
Even when they have seen horror
Even when they have been abandoned.
Children believe God is there, somewhere, watching.

I did

I believed God was watching hordes of people choose evil over good

I believed God was watching fewer people choose good over evil

I believed God was watching...

God was waiting...

God was hoping...for an interminable length of time.

Should we blame God for only watching

Should we blame God for not intervening sooner in our daily lives

Would we not have blamed God for taking away our freedom

of choice

Over good…over evil.

Perhaps, God was waiting for people to recognize the absence of God in their souls

Perhaps, God was waiting for people to recognize the presence of God in the hearts of those who did pray

Perhaps, God was waiting for a child like Anne Frank to show God's spirit lives even when a child dies

Perhaps, God was waiting to hear the voice of Elie Wiesel's pain shout out, "Where was God" so that others, too, would question the whereabouts of God?

In the end, when choices fail, God’s essence intercedes

Did not the blizzards in the East help turn the tide of genocide

Did not the flooding in Noah's time cleanse a distracted people
Did not the parting of the Red Sea rescue the Israelites

We did survive
I survived; you survived
We are here to say kaddish for those who died
We are here to say kaddish for that part of our heart that died with them.

God gives light and life
God creates good and evil
God asks all to be a partner on life's path and choose
Life.

It is the loss of vision that erodes God's potentialities
It is the spark unignited that misleads us all
Is this not what happened then
Is this not what is happening again?

Listen…
The crashing of new holocausts is heard
New children ask old questions
"Where is God?"

Will their questions be met with silence...again

Will new answers be found

Will new choices be made

And if not now…when?

Listen…listen to the wailing of the children

"Where is God?

"Where is God?

"Where is God?

January 3, 1996

What if?

What if we had left Germany before Kristallnacht?
What if when we left Germany, we had left Europe, too?
What if in my new country, I had had brothers and sisters?
What if I had been able to break my silence sooner?
What if someone had told me years ago I was a child survivor?
What if?

As my parents did not know to go
I did not know to speak
I did not know my name was "Child Survivor"
I did not know I had a story
If I had...would I have found my voice, then
I wonder.

Unprepared
For roads I did not "know" to take
The ones I took by choice taught me not more
But different things than those assigned to me.

In the entire universe of roads
Connecting end to end
Crisscrossing round the earth and going backwards into time
No one is worse than that beside it

EXCEPT FOR THOSE THAT END IN MURDER.

Outside of these
All others
Lead to where you need to go on life's long path
Before you die.

Sometimes and in the end
As vision clears
You see where you were going all along
Then "what if's" fade away, as mine begin to do.

March, 1996

Death

Death is always 'round the corner
We will not choose our time
Yet parting need not be the end
For whoever one of us remains.

No longer seen
An absence feels like gone forever
The phone no longer rings
A letter written receives nothing in return
A shared book cannot lead to shared discussions
The place you sit remains forever empty.

Dyings and endings are difficult
Some fear going
Some fear being left.

I wonder how I will feel going
Being left
Managing alone, as if I had not met you, is different from managing alone thereafter
I have come to know the comfort in sharing thoughts and feelings
Sharing aspects of my soul in conversation with you.

It will take the resources of a deep well
From which to draw upon if you should go before I do
It will take trust that I can keep in touch with you and with myself
When the time comes to say goodby.

If it should go the other way
And I depart ahead of you
I hope it will not pain you overly
I wish you peace.

I do not feel afraid to die
Perhaps I will when death comes, finally
But it has come before
Or so I feel.

This life with you has been a gift...
Additional.

If you should go
Your voice will echo as I live my life
If I should go
How cannot mine be there for you?

Perhaps that is what is
There for one another
Inside our selves.

Going through the cycles of life and death
Finding and losing
Finding and losing
Finding and losing the most important persons in our life
Until we find the essence of who we are.

July 25, 1996

Chapter X. Epilogue: Looking through the kaleidoscope of my life

I no longer feel embarrassed when asked questions about my being Jewish, or being too young, or not having been in a concentration camp... because I know much more now about who I am and I feel free to claim it - all of it. I am more than my name, child survivor, and more than my Holocaust story and more than my refugee differences. I am Eva, pronounced "E-fa" by my father and Eva by my friends and Eva Metzger by my classmates and Eva Metzger Brown on my marriage certificate and Dr. Eva Metzger Brown by the professional community, and Mom and Grandma by my children and grandchildren. I am a psychologist, mediator, writer, poet, student, teacher and more. I have moved into a broader sphere where I no longer have to defend parts of myself for who I am because I value the many parts that I am. This does not mean that all my questions are answered in any sphere of my life nor that all the layers of silence surrounding me are gone. There will always be more questions; there will always be more layers to explore. But in "coming out of my hiding place" I have learned that I am now able to search for deeper and richer meanings and complexities in the inner recesses of my entire life and that many others - Holocaust survivors, survivors from the other traumas in life and some of those from the second generation - who are getting older as am I, are wishing to do the same. They are reflecting upon and trying to understand themselves as I am trying to understand my experience in

the context of my beginnings. Once upon a time, I searched for answers silently, by myself, now I have learned the value of searching aloud with others who understand that the layers of a concrete wall are something with which we can all identify.

They Would Say:

You Don't Look Jewish

I would believe them
I would look in the mirror
See the blond hair - light eyes
Nod and say: You don't look Jewish.

I would feel bad-ly inside though
I knew I was Jewish
Inside\outside clashed
Bumped elbows.

It was like buying a size 8-dress
When you needed a size 12
Or wearing a size 5-shoe
Needing a size 9.

The wrong size hurt
Pinched in the wrong places
Made you feel uncomfortable
Not rightly put together.

Was I really Jewish - inside
Was I supposed to have been brunette - outside

My father called me the unpainted one
I wondered, had a mistake been made.
No.

With time I learned:
"Inside" is what mattered
Not the "outside" everyone remarked upon.

Outside and inside did not have to match
Inside is what you were - Jewish is who I was.

All\American on the outside
Did not counter my being part\European - on the inside.

Accent-less on the outside
Was not contradictory to an accent - on the inside.

It was confusing though
Others assuming one thing or another about me
About who I was
When I was small and not yet sure.

Straightening out this disarray
Between facades and undertones
Appearances and reality

Took many years.

As the disorder in my life cleared
My understanding of what I viewed in the mirror did too
My reflection showed me...myself
Now I look and see:
    A non-Jewish-looking Jew
    A non-Jewish-sounding refugee
    An American-appearing European-Jewish survivor.

The composite of inside\outside is who I am
And I accept it all
Little pieces of this\little pieces of that
A collage - unique.

Today, when someone looks at me with questioning eyes
I divulge past secrets and say:
    I know I don't look Jewish...
    I know I don't sound like a refugee...
    I know I look too young to be a survivor BUT...
I smile...
Relieved...they burst out laughing.

As the path is cleared of mis-assumptions
With awkwardnesses addressed

I share what I have learned:

Fewer assumptions
Hurt less
Lead to kinder ways of living
For me...and you.

April 10, '97

The term Holocaust came into being in the early '60's. It means scorched earth. I was there when the raging fires took place; I survived the edicts of The Final Solution, but I did not remember what I had lived through for a very long time. Some maintain that what you do not know does not injure you. In my case, I would say that what I did not know may have protected me in my very early years, but thereafter this "absence of memory" or silence produced by denial and the "concrete wall" limited me. It limited me in trying to understand potential and new meanings for my experience.

Looking back I can see how the concrete wall protected me from what I felt to be the evil in the world. However, I can also see how the concrete wall kept me from learning it could be different. I think now that the concrete wall got laid down, quickly and slowly:

- quickly, as I lived through a series of traumatic events and traumatic separations from my parents; like the Iron Curtain it snapped shut - keeping what was inside, inside, and keeping what was outside, outside;

- slowly, as I lived through those post-war experiences of alienation, strangeness and confusion; like lichen grows in the cracks of a wall, at the base and in between the stones, crevices were sealed shut - making the wall impenetrable to others and impervious to what lay outside.

I could say my fear of what I might find limited me from finding

it, but in truth even my fears were denied.

The early and traumatic physical separations from my parents had been too acute. The limited language capabilities I had at the time hurt me. During the years following, the unspoken impact of the Holocaust added injury. But under conditions where one feels safe and acknowledged, some trauma survivors may be able to begin to feel and speak, truly speak again, finding words to describe their experience of the past and its impact on the present. I did and continue to do so. For me, it is a continually changing and unfolding process.

The chapters that precede this one try and shed light on my breaking-through the concentric walls of silences that surrounded me so that I could claim my inner reality and give it words. For the survivor, for me, I think the search is always the same, not to find something but to restore a felt loss, giving it new meaning and thereby enlarging one's view of one's existence. Some have asked me, "How long before one can find hope to start again?" I do not know. I do not have answers for others. For me, it took a long time. But with hope regained, the importance of how long it took for me to break my silence evaporated.

As I return to the "Immigration Trail" that opens this book, I can see its question marks reduced in number as many unasked

questions found answers. A few still linger unresolved. And I can acknowledge the impact of the frequent separations from my father and my mother and not deny that these traumas happened to me and not someone else in a story - someone else's story. And I can believe that I was wounded and that it hurt me physically and psychologically. And I can accept that I emigrated from country to country and had my life disrupted more often by the age of three years than many experience in a lifetime. And I can appreciate that I was lucky, that I survived at all; and I can separate what happened to me and what happened to others and let go of self-blame for what happened to other children who did not "make it" and for others who were wounded too. And I can move forward from the past without forgetting it; and I can heal as my Holocaust pain reduces in size but never disappears; and I can talk with my children and my children's children and they can hear from me that I rejoice that we can talk together about the past, knowing that in the sharing of the atrocities of war and genocide lie the seeds of war's repair.

A few years ago, I began writing a communal letter to my three children on November 9, the anniversary of Kristallnacht. Later, I moved the date to the anniversary of my arrival in the United States on August 6, 1941.

November 9, 1994

Dear Children,

There was a time in my life when I did not record the emotional impact of Kristallnacht on my life. Of course, many people did not. Matters of the Holocaust were neither easily recalled nor "celebrated." The times are different now for many and for me, too. I am happy about this for myself, deep down.

Of course, the anniversary of Kristallnacht is still a reminder of what human beings can do to one another when the evil in them is given free reign to unleash itself. And it is a time of memory of great fear and terror for the victims. In my life, it must have been the first serious outburst of such tensions around me, even though Nanio's illness, after I was born followed by our separation, must have had its impact, too.

It took me many years to acknowledge that in my early years, there had been a great deal of disruption..., but as I know now from my efforts at self-understanding and my willingness to break through my denial, events like Kristallnacht in my early life poisoned the atmosphere around me. Such events impacted on me and on how I perceived the world...in terms of safety and stability.

With this breakthrough I find, that I no longer avoid reading about Holocaust-related materials as I did for so many years. I no longer avoid remembering my own childhood history. In fact, I do just the opposite. I want to know all I can about where I came from and what happened to me. I look to speak to others, who wish to speak with me, about what they went through, too, at that time. And having gone through a period of mourning for my own lost pieces of childhood, I now celebrate my personal survival and revel in it. This does not mean that I do not sometimes shed tears over new thoughts and insights that emerge from the past. Anniversary times, like the anniversary of Kristallnacht, promote such feelings. But the fact that I can now remember, that I can now confront my own "story" and that I can now feel "okay" after an emergence of such memories and a sharing of these memories, makes me feel great....

I wanted to share these thoughts with you on the occasion of the anniversary of Kristallnacht. Kristallnacht is also a part of your story and history, and part of Jacob's, Sally's and, now, Alejandro's history, and the history of other grandchildren still waiting to be born. Maybe one day, you will share the story with them of how, according to Nanio's memoirs their Grandma Eva "saved the day" by crying

aloud and alerting Nanio and Papa that evil was coming as thugs were marching down the street toward our apartment house.

I hope you will come to feel as I do that days such as these (anniversary days) are not only days of mourning the pains of the past but days that we can confront the past and build on it....

With great love, Mom

The Reknitting of the Holocaust Family Tree

My granddaughter, five years old in 10 days
Plays imaginative games with me
Of kitty cats and pokey pups
And anything that pops into our heads
And when we're done we hug and kiss and laugh together.

Today...
Thinking up a new play-game
I show my scar to her
The one I never show
To anyone.

Captivated
She climbs upon my lap to get a better view
Inspecting every stitch, she says her friend has stitches too
All healed, grandma
Just like yours.

She wants to know if I got mine in Amherst...
No, France...oh, she remembers Nanio lost her leg there
And Papa, where was he
The Papa that she never knew
My father, her father's grandfather, her great-grandfather.

Finding out he was in France

She's satisfied...

Everyone accounted for on the Holocaust branch of her family tree

She climbs off

Ready to move on.

Putting away past history of wounds and dislocations

We start anew

As if we'd hardly been...interrupted

The years of a forbidden topic

Transformed...to everyday discussion.

One day, she'll ask to see my scar again

She will you know...

The others, too

Then, I or if not I

My children will talk with them about it.

New questions will be asked

With new considerations

Fresh associations

Liberating the adults

From the timorous silences of their own childhood.

Children have a way of doing so
Grandchildren in particular
Uninhibited by muzzled generations
They become the can-opener
Of silences adults regret.

July 5, 1997

It took me years to learn about breaking silences and then to learn that there are different kinds of silence. The silence used as a defense shuts things down; the silence used as part of the creative process, opens things up. Silence does have a place in one's life and being comfortable with one's silence is a key ingredient for breaking silences, as paradoxical as that may appear. As one works on where one has been when one cannot remember, there is a need to be silent, to sit and listen to oneself and be at ease with one's own sense of quiet. This silence is used not to avoid things but as an avenue to find them. It is within the space created by this quiet that inner dialogues - whispers, echoes and even bad dreams - reverberate and with them, feelings from the heart...and other things too. In the quiet inner spaces created by one's silence, room is made to "play" out the themes of these newly found "voices." At such times, it is critical to find a way to be silent and still by oneself; at other times, it is critical to be silent and still with another and at times with many others. This shared space of calm provides fertile ground for the growth of safe-feelings and trust. Within this zone, memories and feelings increasingly emerged and unfolded for me.

Breaking the first silence is the most challenging. Finding the balance between maintaining silence and breaking silence, and the weaving back and forth between the two, allows one, allowed me, to get at the core of what I really wanted to say about what I

really truly felt. Interpersonal silences got transformed into interpersonal exchange and in turn exchange required my being silent so that I could consider what I felt and what I wanted to say about how I felt.

Every step can be complicated and marked by feelings of sorrow and joy, fury and tranquility, disappointment and contentment as one works to overcome a certain paralysis and frozenness. Each memory leads to others, each feeling leads to feelings of greater intensity, each understanding gets transformed into deeper meanings. Exchange leads to silence; silence leads to exchange. This is how it was in my explorations that led to the five breakthroughs identified in this book. My first talk at the Nurnberg\Furth reunion focused on The Impact of the Holocaust on Our Children and Our Children's Children and led to the finding of my name, "Child Survivor." My interview at the Child Development Research Center focused on the effect of trauma on the developing child and led to the validation of my images as memories. My trip to Angers in search of a memory led both to being able to remember and experience profound feelings of despair over my own traumas and losses, and to begin my own authentic grieving process. I looked for my grandparents in the cemetery and found I was looking for an internal sense of continuity with my Holocaust family tree. My entrance into psychotherapy over the dying of my father led to the discovery of the concrete wall and offered a way to get through it.

This happened by finding a way to trust others and trust myself with the memories and feelings of despair and rage related to what had happened to me. And then as I entered into broader spheres, I looked to break a Holocaust silence in my past by speaking at reunions at Cornell and found I had not been alone with silence nor with the experience of concrete walls; all who listened carried an unstated desire to claim Holocaust memory, to come out of hiding and to share their stories with someone who might feel compassion for their experiences, too. This is a brief maybe oversimplified summary of my explorations but the message is: you do not always find what you are looking for, you find more. With each step and each new effort, the kaleidoscope that mirrored the pieces of my life formed new and fantastic pictures with subtle and not so subtle meanings.

The question is how to start looking. Taking the first step is not as simple as would appear in John F. Kennedy's suggestion. One step does not only lead to another; it leads to the unknown. Getting interviewed, claiming memories, traveling to find profound feelings and collecting my grandparents were sometimes accompanied by fear, nightmares and panic. Going on a journey requires a trust burnt out of many Holocaust survivors and some members of the second generation too. Sometimes you plan your trip because you know what you are looking for; sometimes you plan your trip and in the act of traveling you find insights you did not know that you

were looking for. And then on the way and crossing at right angles you find something you sensed but for which you had no image, little feeling and no language. You collide with the concrete wall, an enclosure built to protect you. It was then that I learned the most important thing of all, that my need for self-protection locked me within a cell. Others may experience these things differently, but for me, I found that if I wanted to get free, I could not do it alone. I would have to trust again. I would need to trust someone; I would need to trust many someones. I would learn that in so doing the circular wall surrounding me could be transformed from a cold, fixed concrete wall to a warm, liberating human embrace. Within such a bond, I found the encouragement to break-through silence, intractability and constriction and enter bigger and broader spheres of personal existence.

At the same time that I needed to trust and learn to rely on others, I needed to acknowledge my own strength. I needed to recognize that the same events that had traumatized me had also made me strong. I was a survivor; in some ways I was made of steel. I was no longer needing to be in a helpless position, unless I put myself there. I could use the strengths grown in the earth of the Holocaust to help myself "figure out" how to emerge from inside the concrete wall. This is how my search unfolded. Part of it, I directed; part of it seemed to have a plan of its own which I discovered only as I took each step; part of it was connected to a

courage that refused to give up - this time; part of it was connected to a growing trust.

Yet...I still wonder how it could happen at all. Not only that I survived, not only that I broke my silence and came out of hiding from behind the concrete wall, but how it was allowed to happen? How one group of people was allowed to murder another group, the group of people to which I belonged: the Jewish people. I still wonder that any group of people would want to and almost succeed in carrying out a plan of genocide and that no one could come to the rescue, not even for the children. I still wonder, if there is not a way to find a common understanding so we can protect the children from the evils of such violences, if indeed we cannot protect ourselves. I still wonder if there is not a way for each of us to remember our own childhood and say, "No" to such atrocities. It is evils such as these which drive the soul into deeper and more isolated hiding places behind a concrete wall. That was my experience and that is how I came to understand my experiences as I peered into the kaleidoscope that held together the many broken pieces of my life.

XII. Turning (Teshuvah)

Smashed glass
shattered shrapnel
scattered roots and branches from the family tree
spiral through the kaleidoscope of my life
forming frightening and fantastic pictures
of fragments in multiple configurations.

As sunlight streams through faultlines of my history
I look again and see
old stories get transformed
lost shards regain a place
speechlessness turn to voice
and memories float into awareness.

With each new twist and turn
with each rewriting
with each new morning's dawn
and each New Year...
explorations in my universe of kaleidoscopic panoramas
reveal increasingly an order to my once-disordered life to me.

And newly conscious of a world of broader spheres
more vast than I had ever recognized before
I stay awake
to wonder at the skies
turning...turning...
turning into galaxies of possibility once hidden.

May 13, 1997

This is the story of the reconstruction of my Holocaust beginning.

This is the story of how I broke my silence as I moved through and beyond the concrete wall.

USHMM LIBRARY
01 0001 0128 8180